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THE HEAVENLY TWINS

BY

SARAH GRAND
AUTHOR OF "IDEALA"

"They call us the Heavenly Twins,"
"What, signs of the Zodiac?" said the Tenor.
"No; signs of the times," said the Boy.

IN TWO VOLUMES
VOL. II.

LONDON
WILLIAM HEINEMANN
1893

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BOOK IV.

THE TENOR AND THE BOY.—AN INTERLUDE.

His words are bonds, his oaths are oracles;
His love sincere, his thoughts immaculate;
His tears pure messengers sent from his heart,
His heart as far from fraud as heaven from earth.
—*Two Gentlemen of Verona.*

CHAPTER I.

MORNINGQUEST, with the sunset glow upon it, might have made you think of Arthur's "dim rich city"; but Morningquest had already flourished a thousand years longer than Caerlyon, and was just as many times more wicked. And it was known to be so, although not a tithe of the crimes committed in it were ever brought to light; but even of those which were known and recorded, no man could have told you the half, so great was their number. Of course, as the place was wicked, the doctors were well to the fore, combating the wages of sin gallantly; and the lawyers also, needless to say, were busy; and so, too, were the clergy in their own way, ecclesiasticism being well-worked; Christianity, however, was much neglected, so that, for the most part, the devil went unmolested in Morningquest, and had a good time.

There were seventy-five churches besides the cathedral within the city boundary, and a large sprinkling of religious sects of all denominations, which caused ferment enough to prevent stagnation; and, of course, where so many churches were the clergy swarmed, and were made the subject of the usual well-worn pleasantries. If you asked what good they were doing, you would hear that nobody knew; but you would also be assured that at all events they were, as a rule, too busy about candles and vestments and what not of that kind of thing, discussing such questions with heat enough to convince anyone that the Lord in heaven cares greatly about the use of one gaud more or less in his service, to do much harm. But, upon the whole, the attitude of the citizens toward the clergy was friendly and unexacting. If nobody heeded them much, nobody opposed them much either, so that, as in any other profession, they enjoyed the liberty of earning their livelihood in their own way. The people considered them without reverence as a part of the population merely; their services were accepted as a necessity in the regular routine of life as bread-and-butter was, and doubtless they did good in some such way, although the one was as much forgotten as the other before it was well assimilated. If the citizens mentioned their

teaching at all, it was merely to repeat what they said of the clergy themselves—that it did no harm.

This was a pleasantry of which they never wearied; but sometimes they would add to it another article of their faith. "The Lord is gracious," they would declare, "and when he sends dull preachers, he mercifully sends sleep also to comfort his afflicted people." So the preachers preached, and their congregations slumbered tranquilly, and everbody was satisfied. If the clergy squabbled amongst themselves, and with their churchwardens, their fellow-citizens were rather grateful to them than otherwise for varying the monotony, so that they were encouraged to wage their internecine combats to their hearts' content; and when these lapsed and they let each other alone, it was always interesting to see how they turned upon the bishop. But nobody was disturbed, for in such a sleepy old place—and the respectable part of it *was* sleepy!—men habitually view the vagaries of their friends with smiling tolerance, and if they comment upon them at all, it is without bitterness.

In general history there are always events, as there are people, that take prominent places and attract attention long after similar events are buried and forgotten. They owe their vitality less to their importance, perhaps, than to some gleam of poetry, pathos, or romance which distinguishes the actors in them; and most old places have a pet tragedy amongst their traditions, but Morningquest was an exception to this rule, for, although it had its particular tragedy, it was quite a new one. From the first, however, it was easy enough to foresee that this one event of all the sorrowful things which had happened in that bad old place, having as it were every desirable requirement of time, setting, and person to invest it with a proper, permanent and most pathetic interest, was the likeliest one to be remembered.

Morningquest was a city of singers, and the citizens were proud of their cathedral choir, which was chiefly recruited from amongst themselves, there being a succession of exquisite boy-voices constantly forthcoming to awaken the slumbering echoes in the ancient pile, and the sweet old sentiments in the people's hearts. Some of the lay clerks had been choristers themselves, and amongst them was one who had been especially noted as a boy for his birdlike treble. It seemed a thousand pities when it broke; but as he reached maturity, he found himself able to sing again, and eventually he developed a very true, if not very

powerful tenor voice, and rose in time to be the leading tenor in the choir. People had flocked to hear him sing in his childhood, and as they still came, it was natural that he should continue to think himself the attraction, and also natural that he should be somewhat puffed up in consequence. He wore a moustache, he wore a ring, he put on airs, he scented his pocket-handkerchiefs, he ogled the pretty ladies in the canon's pew like an officer; but he was an orphan, and had a poor old kinswoman depending upon him, and kept her well; he was harmless, he never did anyone an ill-turn, nor said an evil thing, and he could sing; so that, taken all round, his good qualities outweighed his weaknesses, and he was duly allowed the measure of praise and respect which he earned.

But his rings, and his scents, and his affectations generally, covered a secret ambition. He wanted to be more than a tenor in the choir; he wanted to be an opera singer, and he entered into negotiations with a London *impressario*. He did so secretly, being fearful of discouragement, and also because he wished to surprise his friends, and when a personal interview became necessary he did not ask for the means to make the journey; he had the management of the choir funds, and there being a surplus in his hands at the moment, he made use of the money, borrowing it in perfect good faith, and honestly sure that he would be able to repay it before it was required of him. Had he succeeded, the money would have been returned at once; but, alas, he did not succeed, the money was spent, his hopes were shattered, and his honest career was at an end. "If only he had come to me, the matter might have been put right," the dean said, and he publicly reproached himself for not knowing the hearts of his people better, so that he might have entered with sympathy into their lives, and won their confidence. The tenor ought to have trusted him, but he never thought of such a thing. He was a poor crushed creature, and had abandoned hope. But he went back to Morningquest nevertheless. Indeed, where else could he go? He knew no other place, and had never a friend elsewhere in the world. So he went back mechanically, and he went to the cathedral, and there he hid himself. And there three times a day for three days he looked down from the clerestory, himself unseen, looked into the faces he knew so well, faces which had been friendly faces, eyes that had watched him kindly all his life; and, out there in the cold, he followed the services at which he had been wont to assist, taking a leading part almost so long as

he could remember. And there in the grim solitude by day, and the added horror of ghostly darkness by night, he lived on thought, and suffered his agony of remorse, and the minor miseries of cold and hunger and thirst, till the need of endurance ceased to be felt. And then, amid the misty morning grayness of the fourth day he hanged himself from a ladder left by some workmen engaged in repairs, by whom his body was afterward found desecrating the sacred precincts.

These are the materials out of which Morningquest wove its pet tragedy. The event happened at the beginning of that important year which the Heavenly Twins spent with their grandfather at Morne, and doubtless they heard all about it, but, being very much occupied with a variety of absorbing interests at the time, it did not make any particular impression upon them. It was brought home to them eventually, however, when it might have been considered an old story; but it had not become so then in anybody's estimation, nor has it since because of the pity of it which lent the pathetic interest that makes a story deathless and ageless; the subtle something which influences to better moods, and from which the years as they pass do not detract, but rather pay it the tribute of an occasional addition thereto, by which its hope of immortality is greatly strengthened.

After the tenor's death, the difficulty had been who should succeed him. There was nobody immediately forthcoming, and this had put the dean and chapter in a fix, for it happened that there were services of particular importance going on in the cathedral at the time, to which strangers flocked from a distance, and it was felt that it would never do to disapppoint them of their music. So, on the morning of the great day of all, after the early service, the dean, the precentor, and the organist, having doffed their surplices, returned to the choir, and stood for some time beside the brazen lectern, discussing the subject.

While they were so engaged, a gentleman came up to the dean, and, after making a graceful apology for the intrusion, explained that he had heard of their difficulty, and begged to be allowed to sing the tenor part, and a solo, at the afternoon service.

The dean looked doubtful; the precentor, judging by the stranger's appearance and tone that he might be somebody, was inclined to be obsequious; the organist struck a neutral attitude, and stood by ready to agree to anything.

"I can sing," the applicant said modestly, answering the doubt he saw in the dean's demeanour; "although I confess that I have not been doing so lately. I think I may venture to promise, however, that I shall not, at all events, spoil the service."

"Well, sir," the dean replied, "if you *can* help us, you will really be putting us under a great obligation, for we are in a most awkward dilemma. What do you say, Mr. Precentor?"

"I should say, as the organist is here, if this gentleman would try his part this morning——"

"That is what I was about to suggest," the stranger interposed.

The precentor found the music, the organist retired to his instrument, the dean took a seat, and the stranger sang. When he paused, the dean arose.

"I thank you, sir," he said with effusion, "and I gratefully accept your offer."

The stranger bowed to his little audience, returned the music, and left the building.

He was a young man, tall and striking in appearance; clean shaven, with delicate features, dark dreamy gray eyes, and a tumbled mop of golden hair, innocent of parting. He was well-dressed, but his clothes hung upon him loosely, as if he had grown thinner since they were made; his face was pale too, and pinched in appearance, and his movements were languid, giving him altogether the air of a man just recovering from some serious illness. That he was a gentleman no one would have doubted for a moment, nor would they have been surprised to hear that he was a great man in the sense of being a peer or something of that kind, for there was that indefinable something in his look and bearing which people call aristocratic, and his manner was calm and assured like that of a well-bred man of the world accustomed to good society.

The people who flocked to the afternoon service that day regarded him with much curiosity, and he was certainly unlike anyone whom they had hitherto seen in the choir. A surplice had been found for him, and the dead white contrasted well with the brightness of his hair, and made the refined beauty of his face even more remarkable than it had been in his morning dress. Sitting with the lay clerks behind the choristers, he looked like the representative of another and a higher race, and even those of them whose personal attractions had hitherto been considered more than merely passable when they appeared

beside him were suddenly seen to be hopelessly commonplace. But, although the interest he excited was evident enough, it was equally evident that he himself remained quite unaware of it. In his whole bearing there was not the slightest assumption. He entered with the choir, and might have been in the habit of doing so all his life, so perfectly unconscious did he seem of anything new or strange in the position. As soon as he was seated, without even glancing at the people, he had taken up his music, and continued lost in the study of it until the service opened; and then he sang his part with ease and precision, which, however, attracted less attention at the moment than his appearance. The rest of the choir, animated by his presence, exerted themselves to the utmost, but were too delighted with their own performances to think much of his before the solo began.

Then, however, they awoke. The first note he uttered was a long *crescendo* of such rich volume and so sweet, that the people held their breath and looked up:

> This world recedes; it disappears!
> Heaven opens my eyes! my ears
> With sounds seraphic ring:
> Lend, lend your wings! I mount! I fly!
> O Grave! where is thy victory?
> O Death! where is thy sting?

It was as if a delicious spell had been cast upon the congregation, which held them bound until the last note of the exquisite voice, even the last reverberation of the organ accompaniment, had trembled into silence, and then there was a movement, a flutter, a great sigh of relief heaved, so to speak, as if the pleasure had been too great, and nerves and senses were glad to be released from the tension of it.

The Tenor was slightly flushed when he resumed his seat, but otherwise his face was as serenely impassive as ever.

"It is some great singer from abroad," the people whispered to each other. "He is used to every kind of success, and does not even trouble himself to see if we are pleased. He has sung doubtless to gratify some whim of his own. Such artists are capricious folk." To which the answer was: "Long may such whims continue!"

After the service, the dean hastened to thank the stranger. He shook his hand with emotion, and congratulated him upon

his marvellous gift. "May I ask if you are a professional singer?" the old gentleman said.

"Not yet," was the answer; "but I wish to offer myself for the vacant post of Tenor in the choir, if you are satisfied with my attainments."

The dean stared at him. "Oh—ah—" he stammered in his surprise; and then he added something apologetically about references, and being obliged to ask a few questions.

"If you have the time to spare, I think I can satisfy you now," the stranger answered.

The dean, perceiving that he wished to speak to him alone, bowed courteously, and requested the applicant to accompany him to the deanery. The precentor, who had assisted at the interview up to this point, now watched them depart, and as he did so he pursed up his lips significantly. The stranger had sunk in his estimation from the possible rank of a Russian prince to that of a simple singer, a considerable drop; but the precentor was a musician, and he asserted that the voice was of the finest quality, and trained to perfection. He wanted to know, however, what could bring a man with a fortune like that in his throat to bury himself alive in Morningquest, and he ventured to predict that it must be something "fishy."

The stranger had a long private interview with the dean, but what transpired thereat was never made public. It was known, however, that when he left the deanery the dean himself accompanied him to the door, and there shook hands with him cordially; and it was immediately afterward announced that "Mr. Jones" was to be the new tenor.

"Mr. *Jones*, indeed!" said Morningquest sarcastically. "As much *Jones* as the bishop!" And the precentor was sure that the dean had been taken in by a clever impostor, which would not have been the case, he asserted, if the matter had been referred to him as it ought to have been. But Morningquest declared that there was no imposition about that voice, and as to antecedents, why, it was absurd to be too particular when everything else was so entirely satisfactory.

There happened to be a tiny tenement in the Close vacant when the new lay clerk began his duties as Tenor in the choir, and this he took. It was a detached house, one of a row which faced the apse on the south side of the cathedral. One step led down from the road into the little front garden, and another from that into the house, which was thus two steps below the road in front, but was level with the garden at the back. The

passage ran right through the house, the garden door being opposite the front door; the kitchen was behind a little sitting room on the right as you entered, and on the left were two other rooms when the Tenor took the house, the one looking into the back garden, the other into the front; but these two rooms he immediately turned into one by having the dividing wall removed, and together they made a long, low, but comfortably proportioned apartment, with a French window at either end. The Tenor spent all his spare time when he first arrived in decorating this room, "*making* work for himself," as the people said; and indeed that was just what he seemed to be doing, for he worked as a man does who feels that he ought to be occupied, but he takes no pleasure and finds no relief in any occupation. He frescoed the walls and ceiling of his room with admirable taste and skill, making it look twice the size by cunning divisions of the pattern on the walls, and by the well-devised proportions of dado and cornice.

The dean often went to watch him at his work, and sat on a packing case (the only article which the room contained at the time) by the hour together talking to him, a circumstance which, taken with the fact that other gentlemen in the neighbourhood also called upon him and lingered long on the premises, greatly exercised the inquisitive minds of the multitude, especially when it was perceived that the Tenor, instead of being elated by their condescension, accepted it as a matter of course, and continued always the same—sad, preoccupied, impassive, seldom smiling, never surprised, taking no healthy interest in anything.

When the painting was finished, furniture began to arrive, and this was another surprise for the Close, where houses were not adorned with the designs of any one period, but were filled with a heterogeneous collection of articles, generally aged and remarkably uncouth. Everything in the Tenor's long low room, on the contrary, even down to the shape of the brass coal scuttle and including the case of the grand piano, was in harmony with the colour and design of the frescoes on the walls and ceiling; the floor, which was polished, being adorned here and there with rugs which suggested dim reflections of the tint and tone above. It was a luxurious apartment, but not effeminate. The luxury was masculine luxury, refined and significant; there was no meaningless feminine fripperies about, nor was there any evidence of sensuous self-indulgence. It was the abode of a cultivated man, but of one who was essentially manly withal.

The fame of this apartment having been noised abroad, the precentor came one day to inspect it. There is no need to describe this precentor; one knows exactly what a man must be who calls things "fishy." He was an ordained clergyman, but not at all benevolent, neither was he a Christian, for he did not love his neighbour as himself, and his visit on this occasion was anything but friendly in intention. He was determined to know something more about the Tenor, he said, and he meant to question him. His theory was that the Tenor had been a public singer, but had disgraced himself, and was unable to appear again in consequence; and on this supposition he intended to proceed.

He found the Tenor with his hat in his hand on the point of leaving the house; but the precentor was not delicate about detaining him. He walked into the sitting room without waiting to be asked, pried impertinently into everything, and then sat down. The Tenor meantime had remained standing with his hat in his hand patiently waiting, and he still stood, but the precentor did not take the hint.

"You are an opera singer, I think you said," he remarked as soon as he was seated.

The Tenor looked at him inquiringly.

"Or was it concerts?" he suggested, a trifle disconcerted.

The Tenor looked gravely amused.

"It was not the music halls, of course?" the precentor persuasively insinuated.

"Well, hardly," said the Tenor, fixing his steady eyes upon the man in a way that made him wince. "I have some business to attend to in the town," he added. "Pray make yourself at home so long as it pleases you to remain;" with which he brushed his hand back over his glossy hair, put on his hat, and sauntered out, leaving his gentle guest to ruminate.

The interest which the Tenor had begun by exciting in the breasts of the quiet inhabitants of Morningquest did not diminish all at once, as might have been expected. He was only a lay clerk, to be sure, but then he was so utterly unlike any other lay clerk. He was always so carefully dressed, for one thing, and maintained so successfully that suggestion of good breeding which had been their first impression of him; was altogether so distinguished in appearance that it was a pleasure to hear strangers exclaim: "Who *is* that?" and to be able to surprise them with the off-hand rejoinder: "Oh, that is only our tenor."

Then he was a stranger from nobody knew where; he went by the name of "Jones," which was not believed to be his; he had a magnificent voice, and he remained in Morningquest in an obscure position, making nothing of it. True, he must have means; but what after all were the means which he appeared to possess compared with the means which he might be enjoying? And further—and this was considered the most extraordinary circumstance of all—there was his attitude in the cathedral. He followed the services devoutly; and such a thing as attention, let alone devotion, on the part of a lay clerk had never been heard of in Morningquest. There was not even a remote tradition in existence to prepare anybody's mind for such a contingency.

So that altogether the man was a mystery; a mystery, however, toward which the kindly people were well-disposed. And no wonder. For the Tenor's manners were as attractive as his appearance, and his ways were not at all mysterious when considered apart from the points already indicated, but, on the contrary, simple in the extreme: the ways of one who is kindly courteous and considerate on all occasions, paying proper respect to every man, and also rigorously exacting from each the respect that was due to himself. He would always see people who called upon him, and though it was believed that he would rather not have been disturbed, he was too much of a gentleman to show it. In fact, it was agreed that he was a gentleman before everything, and not at all like a "Jones"; and therefore, acting on some instinctive perception of the fitness of things, the citizens dropped the offensive appellation altogether and called him "the Tenor" simply, as they might have called him "the Duke."

There was at first a good deal of wonder as to where the money came from with which he furnished his little house in the Close. How did he manage to buy so many books and pictures? and how could he afford to give so much away in charity? For it was known beyond a doubt that he had on more than one occasion relieved the families of the other singers, and had relieved them, too, in a most substantial way. It was evident that he had means; but if he had means, why did he sing in the choir? This question was the Alpha and Omega of all that concerned him.

It was asked everywhere and by everybody; but no one could answer it save the dean, who was not to be approached upon the subject. Finally, however, people grew tired of form-

ing conjectures which were neither denied nor affirmed, and, becoming accustomed to the Tenor's presence amongst them, they ceased as a regular thing to discuss his affairs.

But this was not the case until a story had been circulated about him which was generally believed, although nobody knew from whence it emanated. He was, according to the story, the illegitimate son of an actress, and some great—in-the-sense-of-having-a-title—man, from whom he inherited his aristocratic appearance and a small income. His mother, it was said, had been an opera singer, which accounted for his voice ; and shame, they declared, on the discovery of his birth, had driven him into his present retirement, and caused him to renounce the world. As this story accounted in the most satisfactory manner for all that was strange about him, it was regarded in every respect as authentic ; and, after the wickedness of titled men and the frailty of acting women had been freely commented upon with much sage shaking of the head, as if only titled men were wicked and acting women frail, and Morningquest itself was a saintly city, innocent of any deed not strictly in accordance with its word, the matter was allowed to drop, and the Tenor was left to "gang his ain gait," which he would have done in any case, probably, but which he continued to do in a quiet, earnest, regular way that won him a friendly feeling from most men, and more than his share of sympathy and attention from the good women who had not self-love enough to be wounded by his indifference. Unsophisticated little maidens, just budding into womanhood, would peep after him shyly from the old-fashioned houses sometimes, and would feel in their tender little hearts a gentle pity for one who was so handsome and so unfortunate. Like the true hero of romance, he was believed by them to be supremely unhappy, and all they asked was to be allowed to comfort him ; but he noticed none of them. And so the little maidens blushed at first for having thought of him at all, and then forgot him for somebody else ; or, if the somebody else did not come quickly, they began to regard the Tenor with a totally different feeling—almost as if he had wronged them in some way. But the Tenor continued to "gang his ain gait," and was alike indifferent to their pity or their spite.

His little house, like most of those in the Close, had an old walled garden behind it, a large garden for the size of the house, and so sheltered that many things grew there which would not grow elsewhere in the open. The house itself was picturesque on that side, having a bright south aspect favour-

able to the growth of creepers, with which it was thickly covered, jasmine, clematis, honeysuckle, and roses succeeding each other in their regular order; and the garden was always full of flowers. It was here that the Tenor spent much of his time, hard at work. He had evidently a passion for flowers, and 'was a most successful gardener, the conservatory and orchid house, which he had had built soon after his arrival, being always lovely even in the winter. The building of these two houses was considered an extravagance, and had caused the Close to point the finger at him for a while; but when someone declared that the unfortunate Tenor had probably inherited much of his mother's recklessness, and was not therefore responsible as other people were, the suggestion was considered reasonable enough, and from that time forward the Tenor's expensive tastes were held to be separate matter for commiseration; the truth being that Morningquest could not bear to be on bad terms with the Tenor, and would have found an excuse for him had he outraged the best preserved prejudices it ever held.

It was only necessary to glance at the Tenor's books to perceive that he was a student. Many valuable works in many languages were scattered about his house, and it was a well-known fact that he spent much of his leisure in poring over these. To what end his studies might be directed no one, of course, could tell, but it was assumed that he had acquired a respectable amount of knowledge from the fact that the dean, himself a learned man, delighted not a little in his conversation. When this fact had been fully ascertained by careful observation, smouldering curiosity blazed up afresh, and surmise was once more busy with the Tenor's name. Did he write for the magazines, they wondered? It seemed likely enough, for it was notorious in Morningquest that people who did that kind of thing were not like the rest of the world; and it soon came to pass that certain articles relating to various things, such as drainage, deep sea fishery, the coinage of Greece, competitive examinations in China, and essays on other subjects likely to interest an artistic man, were confidently assumed to be his. And the shy little girls in the old-fashioned houses, who never looked at anything in the magazines but the pictures and the poetry, were wont to credit him with certain passionate lays from which they got quite new ideas of eyes and dies and sighs, and other striking rhymes to musical metres which made their little hearts throb pleasurably.

But nothing more definite was known of the Tenor's labours than was known of anything else concerning him; and, fortunately for himself, there was that in his bearing which preserved him from being personally annoyed by impertinent curiosity, so that he was most probably pretty nearly the only person in the city who had no idea of the interest he himself excited.

Two years had glided by in great apparent tranquillity since the day the Tenor entered the choir; two years, during which he had trodden the path of life so uprightly, and so purely, that not even a suspicion of wrong-doing was ever breathed against him by gentle or simple, good or bad. It was a calm and passionless existence that he led, the life of an ascetic, but of a cultivated ascetic, devoted to the highest intellectual pursuits, and actuated by the belief that their value consisted, not in their market price, nor in the amount of attention called fame, which they might attract to himself, but in the pleasure they gave and in the good they did. Many a weary man whose life had been wasted in the toil of bringing himself before the world, when he had reached the summit of his ambition, might well have envied the Tenor his placid countenance and untroubled lot; some might even have perceived that there was more of poetry than of commonplace in the quiet life which glided on so evenly, soothed by the cathedral services, cheered by the chime, and guarded by the shadow of its gray protecting walls.

The Tenor's cheeks had been haggard and worn when he first settled in Morningquest, and dark circles round his eyes had betokened sleepless nights, and the ceaseless gnawing ache of a great grief. But all that had passed as the days wore on, giving place to a settled expression of peace—peace tinged with a certain sadness, but dignified by resignation. Gradually, too, although he remained slender, he ceased to be emaciated, and his cheeks assumed a healthy hue that very well became them.

CHAPTER II.

IT was thought at first that the dean's intimacy with the new Tenor arose from a sense of duty sharpened by the feeling of self-reproach with which he had regarded his fancied neglect of the old one; but, however that might have been, it was

continued from a genuine liking for the man himself. No one in Morningquest knew the Tenor half so well as the dean did, no one could have had a truer regard for him, or watched the passing of his trouble with more affectionate interest, or noted the change for the better which had been wrought by the regular occupation of those peaceful days with greater satisfaction. The dean knew the Tenor's story, so that their relations might be called confidential; but for two years no allusion had been made by either of them to the past, neither had any plans been formed for the future.

At the end of that time, however, the dean noticed signs of awakening energy in his friend. The Tenor performed his duties less mechanically. His apathy was broken by fits of restlessness. He had found the mornings long lately; he had thought the afternoons objectless; and when evening came and the lamps were lighted, he wearied of his books and music, and chafed a little for something, not change exactly; but he was conscious of a desire—and this he only felt at times—a desire for some trifling human interest which should make the life he was leading fuller. He had awakened, in fact, from his long lethargy, and found himself alone.

The Dean of Morningquest was a remarkable man. He had the fine physique, the high-breeding, and the scholarly reputation common to that order of divines who keep up the dignity of the Church without doing much for Christianity. In person he was tall, but stooped from the shoulders. He had white hair, a fine intellectual face; fresh, and with that young look in it which has been called saint-like, and is only seen on the faces of those in whom passion has not died a natural death as the vital powers decay, but has been brought into subjection, and made to do good work instead of evil. No man consorted more habitually with his equals, or seldomer entertained the notion that there were such people in the world as his inferiors. He practised his religion to the last letter of church law, and worshipped Christ the Son of God; but there is no doubt that he would have turned his exclusive back on Christ the carpenter's son, and had him prosecuted for an impostor had he presented himself with no better pedigree. He could tell the story of the Saviour's sufferings with infinite pathos because he knew who the Saviour was; but he could not have told the same story with the same power had the hero of it been merely one common man sacrificing his life for others. What affected the dean was the enormous condescension. It was the great-

ness of the Man, not the greatness of the deed, that appealed to him. A poor tradesman might sacrifice his life nobly also; but, then, what is the life of a tradesman comparatively speaking?

People called the dean proud and worldly wise, but this was not true of him. He may have believed that all the people of Palestine belonged to county families, and were therefore called the chosen people, but he never said so. A certain gentle humility of demeanour always distinguished him, no matter to whom he spoke; and he was without doubt a thoroughly good nineteenth century churchman, living at his own level, of course, and true to his caste, toward the weaknesses of which he exercised much charity and forbearance, while he expressed his condemnation of its sins by rigorously excluding from his family circle any member of it who had been openly convicted of disgraceful conduct, just as he excluded professional men and other common citizens when they held no official position which he was obliged to recognize, and were not connected with the landed gentry. But these were the characteristics of his position, for as a dean he was required to be the slave of precedent; as a man, however, he was known to be just and generous, and an excellent good friend to all who had any claim upon him, from the bishop who governed him down to the humblest chorister in the cathedral which he governed.

It was in the early spring when the dean first noticed what he took to be a change for the better in the Tenor's attitude toward life at large. The dean was susceptible himself to kindly changes in the season; so much so, indeed, that, contrary to all precedent, he allowed himself to be tempted out after dark one night into the Close by the balmy mildness of the weather. His mind had been running all day upon the Tenor, and, noticing as he passed his little house that the blind was up, and the sitting room window wide open, showing the lamplit interior, and the object of his thoughts pacing restlessly to and fro, he determined to go in and have a chat. The Tenor received him cordially, but his manner was somewhat absent, and for a wonder the conversation flagged.

"Are you well?" the dean asked at last. "You look somewhat fatigued, I think, and pale."

"Yes, I am well, thank you," the Tenor answered, brushing his hand back over his forehead and hair, a gesture which was habitual. "But I fancy," he added smiling, "that I am beginning to be a little"—he did not know what.

"Ah!" said the dean, looking at him with the grave, critical air of an anxious physician, and ruminating before he pronounced his diagnosis. "You have shown most extraordinary perseverance in the course of life you marked out for yourself," he finally observed; "and I trust your resolution is well recompensed by having obtained for you that peace of mind which you sought. But there is one thing I should like to be permitted to point out to you. I do not venture to advise, because, in the first place, it is always a difficult matter to decide on what would be best for another man's welfare; and, in the second"—the dean always spoke with great deliberation—"a man who has proved himself so capable of acting with prudence and determination, so competent to judge, and so firm in carrying out his convictions as you have been, might well consider advice from anyone presumptuous. And, therefore, I am merely going to observe that, lately, it has seemed to me to be a pity that your life should continue much longer to be a life of inaction. I hope, and indeed I think, that the years you have spent so well in this quiet way have been even more beneficial than you yourself imagine; that they have not only reconciled you to life, but have given you back the confidence and energy which should belong to your character and abilities, and the ambition to succeed in the world which should belong to your age. For some time past it has seemed to me that you are more restless than you used to be; and I have fancied, indeed I may say I have hoped, that you are at last beginning to long for change."

The Tenor sat silent and thoughtful for a while.

"No," he began at last, "I do not even yet long for change, as you would understand the longing. I have begun to feel a want, though I scarcely know of what—of companionship, perhaps, of some new interest; but I have no inclination for any change that would take me away from here. After the storm I passed through, this place has been for me a perfect haven of rest; and now that my peace of mind has returned to me, do you think it would be wise, by any voluntary act, to alter the present course of my life, seeing that it is so well with me as it is? When a man is content it does not seem to me that any change can be for the better; and, trifles apart, I really am content."

"God grant it may last," the dean responded earnestly. "Only I would warn you to be ready for change in case it comes to you in spite of yourself. I would warn you not to

feel too secure. For I have noticed this, that, for some mysterious reason which no mortal can fathom, it appears to be the will of Heaven that when a man is able to say sincerely, 'I am happy'; when he is most confident, believing his happiness to be as firmly placed as earthly happiness can be, then is the time for him to be most watchful, for then is change most likely to be at hand. Indeed, it has seemed to me that this feeling of security, or rather of content with things as they are, is in itself an indication of coming change."

As he finished speaking the cathedral clock above them began to strike the hour. Slowly the mellow notes followed each other, filling the night with sound, and dying away in a long reverberation when the twelfth had struck. Then came silence, then the chime, voicelike, clear, and resonant:

After which all was so still that the Tenor, looking up through the open window at the moonlit cathedral, towering above him, gray, shadowy, and mysterious, felt as if the world itself had stopped, and all the life in it had been resolved into a moment of intense self-consciousness, of illimitable passionate yearning for something not to be expressed.

The next day was Saturday, and in the afternoon the Tenor had to sing.

CHAPTER III.

THERE is human nature, both literally and figuratively speaking, in Wagner's method of setting a character to a tune of its own; for, although our lives can hardly be said to order themselves to one consistent measure, our days often do.

For months now, "When the orb of day departs," Schubert's song, had accompanied the Tenor. It had soothed him, it had irritated him; it had expressed passionate longing, it had been the utterance of despairing apathy; it had marked the vainest regret, and it had suggested hope; it had wearied him, it had comforted him; but it had never left him. That Saturday morning, however, when he awoke, his mind was set to another

measure. Schubert's song had gone as it had come, without conscious effort on his part; but it had left a substitute, for the Tenor, as he lingered over his morning's work, found himself continually murmuring whole phrases of a chant which he had heard once upon a time when he was staying in an old town in France. It was the Litany of the Blessed Virgin sung at Benediction by some unseen singer with a wonderfully sympathetic mezzo-soprano voice. The Tenor had gone again and again to hear her in this chant, the music of which suited her as well as it did the theme. The words of adoration, "Sancta Maria, Sancta Dei Genetrix, Sancta Virgo virginum," were uttered evenly on notes that admitted of the tenderest expression, while the supplication, the "Ora pro nobis," rose to the full compass of the singer's voice, and was delivered in tones of passionate entreaty. At the end, in the "Agnus Dei," the music changed, dropping into the minor with impressive effect, the effect of earnestness wearied by effort but still unshaken; and it was this final appeal in all its pathetic beauty that now recurred to the Tenor. He had not thought of the chant for years, nor had there been anything apparently to recall it now; but all that day it possessed him, and at intervals he caught himself involuntarily singing it aloud:

"Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, parce nobis Domine,
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, exaudi nos Domine,
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis."

He sang it while he was dressing; he whistled it with his hands in his pockets while he walked up and down the room waiting for his breakfast; and at breakfast, with the newspaper before him, he hummed it to himself steadily. He began it again as he crossed the road to enter the cathedral for the early morning service; he continued it while he was putting on his surplice; he marched to it in the procession, and he rapped it out on his music book when he had taken his seat in the choir. He opened the book to study his solo for the afternoon service, but before he was halfway through his mind was busily rendering, not the music before him, but

"Angus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, parce nobis Domine."

The haunting strain had become an intolerable nuisance by this time, and he made a vigorous effort to get rid of it by giving his mind to what was going on around him, and inter-

esting himself in the people as they entered and took their places in stall and choir, and canon's pew, chancel and transept. Being Saturday, there was a good attendance even at this early service. Strangers from a distance came in to see the cathedral, and people in the place came in to see the strangers; so that there was plenty to observe, especially for one who (unlike the Tenor) was a little behind the scenes or had peeped beneath the surface and beheld the various incidents of the life-dramas which were constantly being enacted in the sacred edifice itself from service to service in the midst and with the help of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, prayers and sermons, under the dean's very nose, and often in the presence of the bishop. The world at worship is a worldly sight, and there was a certain appropriateness in the Tenor's *miserere*; but he failed to apply it although it kept him company to the end, and was still faithful when he sallied forth from the gloom of the cathedral and went on his way with the rest in the sunshine and freshness of a glad new day.

As the time for the afternoon service approached, the people began again to flock to the cathedral, but in crowds now, for it had been rumoured that the Tenor was to sing.

The choir, from their lateral position on either side of the aisle, were able to look up and down the church, having on the one hand and opposite the distinguished visitors who were accommodated with seats in the stalls, the canon's and dean's pews; and on the other the officiating clergy and the congregation generally. It was an advantageous position for those who came to observe, but the Tenor had not hitherto been one of these. The music, when it was interesting, absorbed him; and when it was dull the monotony soothed him, so that he noticed nothing. It had done so this afternoon. During all the first part of the service he neither saw nor heard, but did his work mechanically like one in a dream; and in every pause of it the old chant recurred to him, filling his heart with a separate undercurrent of solemn supplication, now in French: "Agneau de Dieu, qui effacez les péchés du monde, ayez pitié de nous," and now in Latin: "Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis."

The dean preached a *sermonette* on Saturday afternoon, which he took the precaution to deliver before the anthem, so that the people might still have something to look forward to and keep their seats. The *sermonette* over, the organ played the opening bars of the Tenor's solo, and the choir stood up,

While he waited for the note, the Tenor absently fixed his eyes on a lady in the canon's pew. The spell of the old chant was still upon him, and, instead of preparing his mind for his task, he let it murmur on: "Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, parce nobis Domine"—while a rapt silence fell upon the congregation—not a ribbon rustled; the expression of expectation was most intense. One would scarcely have expected the Tenor to take up the note at the right moment, his mind being preoccupied by another strain, but he did. The lady in the canon's pew held the music of the anthem before her, and had been following that; but when the first clear notes of the Tenor's voice rang through the building she looked up as if in surprise, their eyes met, and with a shock the Tenor awoke from his lethargy, faltered for a moment, and then stopped. The organ played on, however, and he quickly recovered; but the pause had been quite perceptible and the people were amazed. It was the first time that such a thing had happened with their Tenor, which made it a matter of moment; and the wonder of it grew, parties being formed, the one to excuse the slip and call it nothing, the other to blame him for his carelessness, as people who never disappoint us are blamed, with bitterness, if for once by chance they err.

That night the Tenor's restlessness grew to a head. He was engaged upon a piece of work he wished to finish, but he could not settle to it; and after making an ineffectual effort to concentrate his attention upon it, he took up his hat and strolled out.

It was a lovely moonlight night. The line of trees in the Close were in flower, and their sweetness was overpowering. He did not stay there, however, but wandered out into the city, with his hat pushed back from his forehead, and his hands in his pockets. The gas was not lighted in the streets as the moon was near the full; and beneath her rays, all common objects, however obtrusively vulgar by daylight, were refined into beauty for the moment.

> "Pater de cœlis Deus, miserere nobis;
> Fili Redemptor mundi Deus, miserere nobis,
> Spiritus sancte Deus, miserere nobis;
> Sancte Trinitas unus Deus, miserere nobis"—

the Tenor sang softly to himself as he slowly pursued his way.

He had some sort of a vague idea that he would like to go and look at the quaint old market-place by moonlight; and

when he reached it, he stopped at the corner, interrupting his song to gaze in artistic appreciation at the silent scene before him, at the heavy masses of shade interspersed with intervals of mellow moonlight, and the angles of roof and spire and ornament cut clean as cameos against "the dark and radiant clarity of the beautiful night sky."

The market-place was an irregular square, picturesquely enclosed by tall houses of different heights and most original construction, among them the east end of a church and part of a public building of ancient date were crowded in; without incongruous effect, however, the moonlight, crisp, cool, and clear, having melted hue and form of all alike into one harmonious whole, to the charm of which even the covered stalls, used in the day's dealings and now packed in the middle of the square, and the deserted footways added something.

A tall, slender lad of sixteen or seventeen was standing on the edge of the pathway, just in front of the Tenor. He was the only other person about, and on that account the Tenor had looked at him a second time. As he did so, a young woman came suddenly round the corner, and accosted the boy.

"Qu'il est beau!" she exclaimed, laying her hand on his arm, and smiling up into his face admiringly.

The Boy stepped back to avoid her, with an unmistakable gesture of disgust, and in doing so, he accidentally stumbled up against the Tenor.

He turned round, and apologised confusedly.

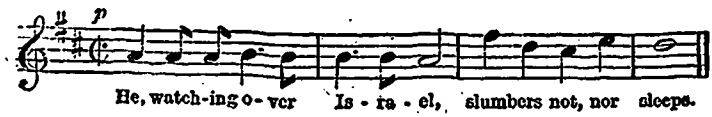
The Tenor raised his hat, and answered courteously. They were standing together side by side now, and remained so for some seconds, silently surveying the scene; and then the Tenor all unconsciously began again to sing:

"Sancta Maria," he entreated, "Sancta Dei Genetrix, Sancta Virgo virginum, ora pro nobis."

The girl had been wandering off again, but at the first note of the supplication she stopped. A chord of memory stirred. She knew the words, she knew the tune. She had sung them both herself often and often at home in France. She was a Child of Mary then—and now?

As the Tenor finished the last note of the phrase and paused, she clasped her hands convulsively, and gasped: "O mon Dieu! mon Dieu! ayez pitié de moi!"

Her half-inarticulate cry did not reach the Tenor and the Boy, neither had they observed her distress, for just at that moment the city clock struck one, and both had raised their

heads involuntarily in expectation of the chime. And presently out upon the night it rolled, a great wave of sound, swelling and spreading, muffled by distance somewhat, but still distinctly sweet and insistent:

"Do you believe it?" said the Boy, glancing toward the girl, and repeating the gesture of disgust with which he had shrunk from her when she accosted him.

The Tenor lifted his hat, and brushed his hand back over his hair. "Do I believe it in spite of *that?* you would say," he answered, considering the girl with quiet eyes. "Yes, I believe it," he declared, "in spite of *that,* which has puzzled older heads than yours."

With which he turned to retrace his steps, taking up the Litany of the Blessed Virgin once more as he went, the supplication: "Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis," being audible long after he was out of sight.

The Boy remained as he had left him for some time, apparently lost in thought; and the girl still stood a little way off in a dejected attitude, her hands clasped before her, her eyes fixed on the ground. She looked ill and spiritless. The Boy, glancing at her carelessly, wondered at the intent expression of her face; he did not perceive that she was praying, but she was.

The midnight stillness deepened about those two; there was not another living creature to be seen. The irregular old buildings on every side looked ruinous in the shadowy moonlight, and the whole market-place presented to the Boy a picture of desolation which chilled him. He was about to turn away with a last cursory glance at the other solitary figure, when something suddenly occurred which arrested his attention. It seemed to startle him too, for he sprang back, with prompt agility, into a dark doorway behind him, from whence he watched what followed with the keenest interest, being careful, however, to conceal himself the while. He had not felt any movement of pity or kindly compassion for the girl; perfect indifference had succeeded the first sensation of repugnance; he would have left her there to any fate that might await her, and would have expected all right-minded people to do the

same. It was therefore with unmitigated astonishment that he beheld the scene which was now being enacted before him. They were no longer alone. A tall and graceful lady of most dignified bearing, with a countenance of peculiar serenity and sweetness, had approached from the opposite direction, and was standing beside the girl, speaking to her evidently, but the Boy was too far off to hear what was said. He could see, however, that the girl's whole attitude had changed. She was no longer dejected, but eager: and she gazed in the lady's face as she listened to her words with an expression of admiration and wonder, one had almost said of adoration, upon her own, as though it were a heavenly visitant who had hailed her. The lady, as she spoke, pointed to a street opposite, and the girl cast a quick glance in that direction; she seemed to be measuring a distance she was impatient to traverse, and moved a step forward at the same time, uttering some short sentence with rapid gesticulation. The pantomime was perfectly intelligible to the Boy, who understood that she was feverishly anxious to carry out some intention on the instant. The lady seemed to hesitate, then, laying her beautiful white ungloved hand on the girl's shoulder, and looking into her face, she spoke again earnestly. The girl answered with passionate protestations, and then the lady smiled, satisfied apparently, and led the way in the direction to which she had pointed, the girl following in haste. Her hat had fallen back, her hair was loosened, her countenance beamed with enthusiasm, as the Boy observed. He was stealing softly after them, skipping from shadow to shadow, in great enjoyment of the whole adventure.

The lady took the girl to a long low rambling house beside a church, at the door of which she knocked. It was opened immediately by a singularly venerable looking old man, evidently a priest, with a fine though rugged face, instinct with zeal and benevolence. He had his hat in his hand, and was just coming out; but when he saw who had knocked, he stopped short, and bowed deferentially. The girl sank down upon the doorstep as if exhausted.

"I have brought Marie Cruchot home, father," the lady said.

"Ah, my daughter, is that you? We have been expecting you for many days," the old man exclaimed in French, taking the girl's hand and raising her gently as he spoke. "I have prayed for you day and night without ceasing, and only just now, as I passed the convent, I went to ask the night portress for tidings of our wandering sheep, and specially mentioned

you. But enter. The good sisters are waiting for you, and will welcome you with joy."

One of two sisters of charity, who were standing behind the priest, now came forward and kissed the girl. The old man raised his hat, and, looking up into the clear depths of the quiet sky, murmured a blessing, and went his way. And then the door was closed.

"Humph!" said the Boy, who was lurking up an entry opposite. "So that is what they do at night, is it? and that is the young person who sold her sister Louise to Mosley Menteith. Now I am beginning to know the world; and what an extraordinary old world it is, to be sure! One half seems to be always kept busy mending the mischief the other half has made."

He peeped cautiously out of the entry, looking for the lady, but she had disappeared, and night and silence reigned supreme.

CHAPTER IV.

ALL that the Tenor had witnessed of the scene in the market-place made little or no impression on him, and he would probably never have thought of it again had he not encountered the Boy a few nights later, standing, idly observant as before, at the same time and almost in the same place.

The Tenor's first impulse was to pass on without speaking, but the Boy looked at him, and there was something in the look, half shy, half appealing, which caused him to stop, and having stopped, he was obliged to speak.

To his first commonplace remark the Boy answered nervously, and with quick glances instantly averted, as if he were afraid to meet the Tenor's eyes. The latter continued to talk, however, and after a little the Boy's timidity wore off, and his manner became assured.

"This is a curious old place, is it not?" he remarked; "and curiously named if you consider how very little *quest* there is for *morning* here, for the new day which would bring the light of truth after the darkness of error."

"It never struck me that the name could have any allegorical significance," the Tenor answered prosaically. "I believe it used to be Morn and Quest. It stands at the junction of the two rivers, you know, or rather just below it. They run their united race from hence to the sea,"

"I know," said the Boy. "But it really is a romantic old place, especially by moonlight; and it teems with historical associations, as the guidebook has it, with its cathedral, cloisters, castle, and close—the closest in England, they say. Don't you feel remote from the world when you get in there, and the four old gates are shut upon you? The water-gate is the most interesting to me."

"Two of the others are architecturally beautiful where they haven't been spoilt by restoration," the Tenor rejoined.

"Ah!" the Boy ejaculated, and then continued boyishly: "You're not a native evidently, or you wouldn't speak so moderately. The inhabitants boast themselves black in the face about everything in the city. They made me believe that the whole earth began here originally, and that it was also the point of departure for the sea. It did wash their walls on the southern side once upon a time; but the sinfulness of the people compelled it to retire ages ago, and it has since enjoyed a purer moral atmosphere twenty miles away."

"Indeed," said the Tenor. "I did not know that the sea was so fastidious!"

"Oh, yes, it is, naturally," the Boy declared; "but it cannot choose its position for itself always any more than we can. But people are more entertaining than places," he pursued; "don't you think so? Now these people, how Godfearing and orthodox they are, and how admirably they make religion part of their daily life in the matter of stretching a point and using the right of Christian charity to be lenient when a too rigorous adhesion to principle would injure their interest. Their chief confectioner retired from business the other day, but they would not give their custom to his successor at first because of his religious opinions. They forsook him for his atheism, in fact; but in a very short time they returned to him for his ice-creams, which are excellent. If you ever feel any doubt about life being worth living, go and get one. It will reassure you."

They had been strolling on as they talked, and now the Tenor turned to look at his companion, being about to answer him, when something in the Boy's face struck him as familiar, and he paused, knitting his brows in a perplexed effort to think what it was. Measured beside himself the Boy was rather taller than he looked, but very slender, and his hands and feet were too small. He had dark eyebrows, peculiarly light luxuriant hair, and, as a natural accompaniment, a skin of extreme fairness and delicacy. In fact, he was too fair for

his age, it made him look effeminate; and had it not been for the dark eyebrows and eyelashes his colouring would have been insipid. As it was, however, there was no lack of character in his face; and you would have called him "a pretty boy" while thinking it high time he had grown out of his prettiness. This was the Tenor's reflection, but his too earnest gaze apparently disconcerted the Boy, who returned it with one quick anxious glance, then seemed to take fright, and finally bolted, leaving the Tenor alone in the road. "That young rascal is out without leave, and is afraid of being recognized," he concluded.

It was some weeks before they met again, and during the interval the Tenor often thought of the Boy with curiosity and interest. There was something unusual in his manner and appearance which would have attracted attention even if his conversation had not been significant, and that it was significant the Tenor discovered by the continual recurrence to his mind of some one or other of the Boy's observations. He had not tried to find out who the Boy was, interest not having stirred his characteristic apathy in such matters to that extent, but he looked for him continually both by day and night, his thoughts being pretty equally divided between him and the lady whose brilliant glance had had such a magical effect upon him the first time he encountered it. She came to the cathedral regularly now, and always sat in the canon's pew; and always when he sang she looked at him, and he knew that the look was an expression of appreciation and thanks. He knew, too, that the day she did not come would be a blank day for him.

CHAPTER V.

THE moon had grown old, but the nights were still scented by the lime-trees when the Tenor met the Boy again. He had begun to believe that the Boy did not live in Morningquest; and, as often happens, he was thinking of him less than usual on this particular occasion, and hence he came upon him unawares.

The Boy was lolling against the iron railings that enclosed the grassy space round which the old lime-trees grew, in the middle of one arm of the Close. It was a bright, clear night, but chilly, and he was wrapped up in a greatcoat which lent a

little substance to his slender figure. The Tenor would have passed him without recognizing him, but for his sandy hair, which shone out palely against the bark of one of the trees.

"I was waiting for you," the Boy said. "Why are you so late to-night?"

"How do you know I am later than usual to-night?" he asked.

"Because, generally, you come out about ten o'clock, and it is nearly twelve now."

"How do you happen to know I generally come out about ten o'clock?"

"Oh," the Boy answered coolly, "I watched you. I have been studying your habits in order to find out what manner of man you are; and I think you'll do," he added patronizingly, with a wise shake of the head. "I guess you were looking for me too, weren't you?"

The Tenor smiled again, and, lifting his hat, brushed his hand back over his hair. "What makes you think so?" he asked.

"I am accustomed to that sort of thing," the Boy replied, with a twinkle in his eyes. "People who meet me once try, as a rule, to cultivate my acquaintance," with which he raised himself from his lolling posture, and added: "I'll walk up and down with you, if you like, but you must give me your arm. I require support."

"Why? are you tired? What have you been doing to-day?" the Tenor asked as he acquiesced, smiling in his grave way, for the Boy pleased him.

"Oh, well"—considering—"I got up this morning."

"That was a serious business!"

"It was"—with emphasis—"for I had to settle a serious question before I arose. I had to make up my mind about free will and predestination. If I could believe in predestination I thought I might have breakfast in bed without self-reproach; but if it were a matter of free will, I felt I should be obliged to get up."

"And how did you settle it?" The tenor asked.

"I didn't settle it," the Boy replied, "for just as I was coming to a conclusion the breakfast bell rang, and the force of habit compelled me to jump out of bed in a hurry. I don't call *that* free will! And I think, on the whole, predestination had the best of it, perhaps, for my breakfast was sent up to me after all, without any action on my part, and I partook of it

in the silence and solitude of my own chamber, with an easy conscience, and the luxuries of an open window and a book. I suppose you can do that every day if you like? You have no one to interfere with you."

"I have no one to interfere with me," the Tenor repeated, thoughtfully. "Perhaps it would be better for me if I had."

"By better you mean happier," the Boy responded, clasping both hands round the Tenor's arm.

The latter looked down at him, wondering a little, but not displeased.

They were walking in the shadow of the houses just then, and could not see each other's faces, but the Tenor's heart warmed more and more to this curious Boy, and he pressed the hand that rested on his arm a little closer. It was a long time since the grave, large-hearted, earnest man had known anyone so young and spontaneous, or felt a touch of human sympathy, and in both he found refreshment—a something of that something which he knew he needed but could not name.

They took a turn up and down in silence, and then the Boy began again, boyishly: "I say, do you suffer from nerves? You made rather a bungle of it the other day, didn't you?"

"You mean when I broke down in that anthem? Were you there? Where did you sit?"

"With the distinguished strangers, of course."

"I did not see you."

"Did you look behind you?"

"No. But are you a stranger here?"

"Well, not exactly," said the Boy, with a great affectation of candour.

They had passed out into the open now, and the Tenor could see the Boy's face. He had glanced at him as we do at the person we speak to, but something he saw arrested his glance, and caused him to look again keenly and closely—the something that had perplexed him before.

The Boy returned his gaze smiling and unabashed. "She put you out, didn't she?" he asked with a grin. "Verily, she hath eyes—at least, I've been told so; but I am no judge of such things myself."

The puzzled look passed from the Tenor's face. "I know what it is," he said. "You are exactly like her."

The Boy laughed. "I meant to keep it a secret. I was

going to make a mystery of myself," he said; "but faculties like yours are not to be baffled, and since you have observed so much, I might as well confess that there are two of us, twins. They call us the Heavenly Twins."

"What, signs of the Zodiac?" said the Tenor.

"No, signs of the times," said the Boy.

There was a little pause and then the Tenor observed: "I should hardly have thought you were twins, except for the likeness. Your sister looks older than you do."

"Well, you see, she's so much more depraved," said the Boy. "And her lovely name is Angelica—excuse me. I must laugh." He slipped his hand from the Tenor's arm, leant his back against a railing, and exploded. "Excuse me," he repeated, when he could contain himself. "I have suffered from this affliction all my life. I can't help laughing."

"So it seems," said the Tenor, "May I ask what provoked this last attack of your malady?"

Before he could answer, they were accosted by a respectable looking man, a small farmer from a distance probably, who was making the most of a rare opportunity by trying to see as much as he could of the cathedral in the dark.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said—the Boy was all gravity in a moment—"but could you tell me what flying buttresses are."

"A sign of rain," said the Boy, whereupon the Tenor seized him by the scruff of the neck and shook him incontinently. For a moment after he was released, the Boy seemed to be overcome by astonishment; but this was rapidly succeeded by an attack of the malady he had declared to be congenital, apparently brought on by the shock of the chastisement, and the Tenor, who had walked on a little way with the countryman answering his questions, left him laughing all over. He waited, leaning against the railing, until the Tenor returned.

"You little wretch——" the latter began.

"That's right, don't make a stranger of me," the Boy interrupted. "Treat me like a younger brother. You make me feel that I have succeeded in establishing confidential relations between us, which is what I want."

The Tenor was about to reply, but his voice was drowned by a sudden clangour of the bells above them. The clock struck, the chime rang, and while they waited listening, the Tenor raised his hat. They were standing at the corner of the cloisters, looking up to the clock tower and its tapering spire,

which surmounted the Norman façade and entrance to the south transept.

"I must go," the Boy said, when he could hear himself speak.

"Will you not come in—to my house—I am afraid I am very wanting in hospitality," the Tenor exclaimed. "I should have asked you before. I live close by. I should be so glad——"

"Not to-night," the Boy interrupted hastily; "another time. Good-bye!"

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN next the Tenor saw Angelica after he had learnt that she was the Boy's sister, he felt that a new interest had been added to her attractions.

It was on a Saturday afternoon in the cathedral, as usual, and she came in late. But almost as soon as she had taken her seat she looked at the Tenor with an earnest, anxious glance that reminded him of her brother, and her colour deepened. The Boy had told her then, the Tenor thought, and he was glad she knew that they had met; it was a bond of union which seemed to bring her nearer.

He noticed now how like in feature the brother and sister were. The girl looked taller as well as older, and was altogether on a larger scale, her figure being amply developed for her age, while the Boy's was fragile to a fault; her hair was dark too, while his was light; but with these slight differences there was likeness enough to show that they were twins. They both had the same shaped eyes, the same straight, well-defined, dark eyebrows and long lashes, the same features, the same clear skin and even teeth; but the expression was different. There was never any devilment in the girl's face; it was always pale and tranquil, almost to sadness, as the Tenor saw it, standing out in fair relief against the dark oak carving of the stalls. Her movements were all made, too, with a certain quiet dignity that seemed habitual. In the Boy, on the contrary, there was no trace of that graceful attribute. He threw himself about, lolled, lollopped, and gesticulated, with as much delight in the free play of his muscles as if he were only let out to exercise them occasionally; and it seemed as if he must always be at daggers drawn with dignity. But such a slender

intellectual creature could not without absurdity acquire the ponderous movements and weight of manner of smaller wits and duller brains. In the girl, quiescence was the natural outcome of womanly reserve; in the Boy, it would have been mere affectation. His lightness and brightness were his great charm at present, a charm, however, which was much enhanced by moments of thoughtfulness, which gave glimpses of another nature beneath, with more substantial qualities. The Tenor had soon perceived that he was not all mischief, romp, and boyishness; all that was on the surface; but beneath there was a strong will at work with some purpose, or the Tenor was much mistaken; and there was daring, and there was originality. This was the Tenor's first impression, and further acquaintance only confirmed it.

Having formed his opinion of the Boy's abilities, the Tenor began to make plans for his future, and the selflessness of the man's nature showed itself in nothing more clearly, perhaps, than in the consideration he gave to the lad's career. His own had not cost him so much as a thought for years; but now he roused himself and became ambitious all at once for the Boy! He believed that there was the making of a distinguished man in him, and he allowed the hope of being able to influence him in some worthy direction to become as much a part of his daily life as another hope had become—a hope which was strongly felt but not yet acknowledged, except in so far as it took the form of a desire to see her, and made known its presence with force in the pang of disappointment which he suffered if by chance she failed to come as usual to the service on Saturday afternoon. He saw in the girl an ideal, and had found soul enough in the laughter-loving Boy to make him eager to befriend him.

And thus into the Tenor's life two new interests had found their way, and something which had hitherto been wanting to make the music of it perfect was heard at last in his wonderful voice when he sang.

CHAPTER VII.

ABOUT this time the weather changed; the nights were wet for a week, and when it cleared up the Tenor had begun to do some work for the dean which kept him at home in the evenings, so that he had no opportunity of seeing the Boy, who

only seemed to come abroad at night, for some little time. He saw his sister, however, in the cathedral regularly once a week, and always she gave him a friendly glance, by which his days were rounded as by a blessing, and he felt content. His being so was entirely characteristic. Another man in his place would have lost the charm of the present in anxiety to reach some future which should be even more complete. But the Tenor took no thought for the morrow; each day as it came was a joy to him, and his hopes, if he had any, were a part of his peace.

The work he was doing for the dean was interesting. He was making drawings to illustrate a history of Anglo-Norman times which the dean was writing. He drew well and with great facility; but these drawings, many of which were architectural, required special care and accuracy, with the closest attention to detail, which made the work fatiguing, particularly as he had to do it at night, his only leisure time just then; and more than once he had tired himself out, and been obliged to put it away and rest. On one of these occasions, instead of going to bed, he stretched himself in an easy-chair beside the open French window which looked out upon the cathedral, and prepared to indulge in the quiet luxury of a pipe while he rested his weary eyes. The great cathedral towered above him, and from where he sat the Tenor caught a beautiful glimpse of it anglewise, of the south transept and tower and spire; the rich perpendicular windows of the clerestory, the bold span of the flying buttresses rising out of the plain but solid Norman base, every detail of which he knew and appreciated.

It was a fair, still, starry night without, and the light air that blew in upon him was sweet and refreshing. His mind wandered from subject to subject—a sleepy sign—as he smoked, and presently he put down his pipe and closed his eyes. He thought then that he had fallen asleep and was dreaming, and in his dream he fancied he heard himself sing. "This is a queer dream," he was conscious of saying. "That is my voice exactly. I have often wondered how it sounded to other people, and now I am listening to it myself, which is strange." But the strangest part of it was that the words to which the music shaped itself in his mind were not the words of any song he knew, but that expression of human nature which contains in itself some of the grandest harmony in the language:

"These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air:
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself;
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve;
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a wreck behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep."

The last words repeated themselves over and over again, on different notes and in another key each time, and with such powerful emphasis that at last it aroused the Tenor, upon whose sleepy brain the fact that it was not a voice but a violin to which he had been listening, dawned gradually, while his trained ear further recognized the tone of a rare instrument, and the touch of a master hand. He got up and went to the window. "Oh!" he exclaimed, "is it you?" and there was a world of pleasure in the exclamation. "Come in."

The Boy, who was standing in the road, opened the little garden gate, and entered. "I am glad you have relented," he said; "for I meant to play until I had softened your heart, and had persuaded you to take me in; and the hope deferred was making me sick."

"I was asleep," the Tenor answered. "Why didn't you come in? You must have known you would be welcome. Here is an easy-chair. Sit down. And, tell me, why do we only meet at night? What do you do with yourself all day?"

"I am not a daylight beauty," the Boy declared. "I look best at night."

"But seriously?" the Tenor persisted.

"Oh, my tutor, you know—Sandhurst—exams—and that kind of thing."

"You are going into the army then?"

But the Boy, smiling, put the question by. The easy, pleasure-loving, sensuous side of his nature was evidently uppermost, and when that was the case it was so natural for him to shirk a disagreeable subject, that the Tenor had not the heart to pursue it further.

"Won't you take your hat off?" he said presently.

The Boy put up both hands to it. "My head's a queer shape," he said, tapping it. "You won't want to examine it phrenologically, will you?"

"No," the Tenor answered, smiling. "Not if you object."

"I do object. I don't like to be touched."

The Tenor, still smiling, watched him as he carefully removed his hat. His head was rather a peculiar shape. It was too broad at the back, and too large altogether for his slight frame, though probably the thickness of his fluffy light hair, which stood up all over it, innocent of parting as the Tenor's own, added considerably to this last defect. There was nothing so very extraordinary about it, however, and the Tenor did not see why he should be sensitive on the subject, and rather suspected that the boy was gravely poking fun at him; but as he could not be sure of this, and would not have hurt his feelings for the world, he forebore to make any remark.

The Boy glanced round the room. "What a wealthy luxurious fellow you are," he observed.

"These appearances of wealth, as you call it, are delusive," the Tenor answered. "I just happened to have money enough to furnish my house when I came here; but I am a very poor man now. I have little or nothing, in fact, but my salary for singing in the choir."

"Oh," said the Boy. "And you might be so rich with your voice."

The Tenor brushed his hand back over his hair.

"Are you lazy?" the Boy demanded.

"No," he answered, smiling again. The Boy kept him smiling perpetually.

"What is it, then? Why don't you work?"

"Well, I do work," the Tenor answered him.

"I mean, why don't you make money?"

"Oh—because I have no one to make it for."

"If you had"—and the Boy leant forward eagerly—"would you? Would you work for a lady who loved you if she gave herself to you?"

"I would work for my wife," said the Tenor.

"Are you engaged?" the Boy asked. There seemed no limit to his capacity for asking.

The Tenor shook his head, and shook the ashes out of his pipe at the same time.

"Are you in love?" the Boy persisted.

The Tenor made no reply to this impertinence, but a glow spread over his face, forehead and chin and throat.

The Boy, whom nothing escaped, leant back satisfied. "I know what it is," he said. "She's married, and you don't like

to ask her to run away with you. I expect she would, you know, if you did."

The Tenor threw himself back in his chair and laughed.

His mirth seemed to jar on the Boy, who got up and began to pace about the room, frowning and dissatisfied.

"You look pale," the Tenor said. "Have you been ill since I saw you?"

"No—yes," the Boy answered. "I had a bad cold. I was very sorry for myself."

The Tenor took up his violin, and examined it. "Where did you study?" he asked.

"Everywhere," was the ungraciously vague reply.

"I wish you would play again," the Tenor said, taking no notice of his ill-humour. "It would be a rare treat for a hermit like me."

"No," was the blunt rejoinder. "I don't want to make music. I want to explore."

"Well, make yourself at home," the Tenor said, humouring him good-naturedly.

"*Make* me at home," the Boy replied. "Confidential relations, you know. You may smoke if you like."

"Oh, thank you," the Tenor answered politely, sitting down in his easy-chair, from which he had risen to look at the violin, and taking up his pipe again.

The Boy was rummaging about now, and, finding much to interest him, he presently recovered his temper, and began to banter his host. But even this outlet was scarcely sufficient for his superfluous life and energy, so he emphasized his remarks by throwing a stray cushion or two at the Tenor; he jumped over the chairs instead of walking round them, and performed an occasional *pas seul*, or pirouette, in various parts of the room. When these innocent amusements palled upon him, he took up his violin and played a plaintive air, to which he chanted:

> "There was a merry dromedary
> Waltzing on the plain;
> Dromedary waltzing, dromedary prancing.
> And all the people said, it is a sign of rain,
> When they saw the good beast dancing;"

executing grotesque steps himself at the same time in illustration.

"Oh, Boy, forbear!" the Tenor exclaimed at last, "or you will be the death of me."

"That's it," the Boy responded cheerfully. "I mean to be life or death to you."

After this he sat down on a high-backed chair, with his hands in his pockets, his legs stretched out before him, and his chin on his chest, looking up from under his eyebrows at the Tenor thoughtfully. It was an interval of great gravity, and when he spoke again the Tenor looked for something serious.

"I say," he began at last.

The Tenor took his pipe from his mouth and waited, interrogatively.

"I say, I'm hungry."

The Tenor looked his dismay.

"Boys always are, you know," the youth added, encouragingly.

"And if there should be nothing in the house!" the poor Tenor ejaculated. "I'll go and see."

He returned quite crestfallen. "There *is* nothing," he said; "at least nothing but bread—no butter even."

"I don't believe you," said the Boy, rousing himself from his indolent attitude.

"Boy, you mustn't say you don't believe me."

"But I don't," said the Boy. "I don't believe you know where to look. Are the servants out?"

"Yes, my solitary attendant doesn't sleep here."

"Then I'll go and look myself."

"Oh, do, if you like," said the Tenor, much amused. And thinking the Boy would enjoy himself best if he were left to rummage at his own sweet will, he took up a book, brushed his hand back over his shining hair, and was soon absorbed. But presently he was startled by a wild cry of distress from the kitchen, and, jumping up hastily, he went to see what was the matter.

He found the Boy standing at one end of the kitchen, clutching a vegetable dish, and gazing with a set expression of absolute horror at some object quite at the other end. The Tenor strained his own eyes in the same direction, but could not at first make anything out. At last, however, he distinguished a shining black thing moving, which proved to be a small cockroach.

"Well, you *are* a baby!" he exclaimed.

"I'm not," the Boy snapped. "It's an idiosyncrasy. I can't bear creepy crawly things. They give me fits."

"I begin to perceive, Boy, that you have a reason for every-

thing," the Tenor observed, as he disposed of the innocent object of the Boy's abhorrence.

"Put it out of sight," the latter entreated, looking nauseated.

But as soon as the Tenor had accomplished his mandate, his good humour returned, and he began to beam again. "What a duffer you are!" he said, taking the lid off the dish he held in his hand. "You have no imagination. You never lifted a dish cover. Why, I've found a dozen eggs—fresh, for I broke one into a cup to see; and here are a whole lot of cold potatoes."

"It doesn't sound appetizing; cold potatoes and raw eggs!"

"Sound! It isn't sound you judge by in matters of this kind. Just you wait, and you shall see, smell, and taste."

"Well, if it please you," the Tenor answered lazily. "I see something already. You have lighted a fire."

"Yes, and I've used all the dry sticks," said the Boy, with great glee. "Won't the old woman *swear* when she comes in the morning!"

The Tenor returned to his book, reflecting, as he prepared to resume it, on the wonderful provision of nature which endows the growing animal not only with such strong instincts of self-preservation, but with the power to gratify them, and to take itself off at the same time and be happy in so doing, thus saving those who have outgrown these natural proclivities from some of their less agreeable consequences.

Presently a hot red face appeared at the door. "Did you say you liked your eggs turned?" the Boy wanted to know.

"I didn't say; but I do, if you're frying them."

"And hard or soft?"

"Oh, soft."

"How many can you eat?"

"Half-a-dozen at least," the Tenor returned at random.

"And I can eat three"—with great gravity—"that will make nine, and leave three for your breakfast in the morning. I daresay you won't want more after such a late supper. I don't think I should myself."

"But do you mean me to understand that the voracity of the growing animal will be satisfied with less than I can eat?"

"Well, you see," the Boy explained apologetically, "the heat of the fire has taken a lot out of me."

"But the waste must be repaired."

"Yes, but the expenditure has been followed by a certain amount of exhaustion, and the power to repair the waste has

yet to be generated; it will come as a sort of reaction of the organs which can only set in after a proper period of repose—a sort of interregnum of their energies, you know."

The Tenor threw back his golden head. "Oh, Boy!" he expostulated, "don't make me laugh again to-night, don't, please!"

The Boy was very busy for the next ten minutes, arranging the table, and quite in his element; cooing as he proceeded, and giving little muttered reasons to himself, in his soft contralto voice, for everything he did. That voice of his was wonderfully flexible; he could make it harsh, grating, gruffly mannish, and caressing as a woman's, at will, but the tone that seemed natural to it was the deep, mellow contralto into which he always relapsed when not thinking of himself. The Tenor thought it hardly rough enough for a boy of his age, but it was in harmony with his fragile form, and delicate, effeminate features.

"Whom the gods love die young," flashed through his mind as he watched him now, coming and going; and he sighed, it seemed so likely; and felt already that he should miss the Boy; and wondered, with retrospective self-pity, how he had managed to live at all with no such interest.

"A golden-headed, gray-eyed, white-toothed, fine-skinned son of the morning must be a sybarite," the Boy observed, entering the room at that moment; "so I bring flowers, and also salad, just cut and crisp."

"May I ask how you knew there was salad in my garden?"

"Well, you may *ask*," the Boy responded cheerfully; "but—let me see, though—perhaps I had better tell you. I found that out the last time I was here. Perhaps you don't know that I came? I wanted to discover the resources of the place, so I took advantage of your temporary absence on business one day, and inspected it."

"Where was I?" the Tenor asked.

"You were busy at the fire insurance office opposite."

"Do you mean the cathedral? Boy, I will not let you mock."

The Boy grinned. "It was the only time I could be at all sure of you," he pursued. "You were going to sing a solo. I saw it advertised in the paper, and laid my plans accordingly. But I *was* in a fright! I thought you might just happen to feel bad and be obliged to come out, and catch me. I felt that strongly when I was picking your flowers in the greenhouse."

He left the room before the Tenor recovered, and returned with a tray on which was the result of his enterprise.

"If you don't like eggs and potatoes fried as I fry them, you'll never like anything again in this world," he asserted confidently, helping the Tenor as he spoke. "The thing is to have the dripping boiling to begin with, you know," he continued—("I'll only give you two eggs at a time)—then plunge them in, and as they brown take them off one by one and put them on a hot dish—I'm speaking of the potatoes now; but don't cover them up, it makes them flabby, and the great thing is to keep them crisp."

"They really are good," said the Tenor. But he had overestimated his capacity, and could only dispose of three of the eggs.

The Boy was disgusted. However, he said it did not matter, since he was there to sacrifice himself in the interests of science, and preserve the balance of nature by eating the rest himself, a feat he accomplished easily.

"Now this is what I call good entertainment for man and beast," he observed.

"May I ask which is the beast?" the Tenor ventured.

"Why, I am, of course," said the Boy. "Did you ever know a boy who wasn't half a beast?"

"Yes. It is all a matter of early association and surroundings."

"Well, if you knew the kind of moral atmosphere I have to breathe at home, you would know also how little you ought to expect of me. But what shall we drink?"

"There is some beer, I believe," the Tenor said dubiously.

"Burgundy is more in my line."

"Burgundy! A boy like you shouldn't know the difference."

"A *boy* like me wouldn't, probably."

The Tenor smiled. "And what do you call yourself, pray? A man?" he asked.

"No; a bright particular spirit."

It was not inappropriate, the Tenor thought, and he got up. "It does not often happen so," he said; "but now I think of it I believe I have some Burgundy in the house. The dean sent me a dozen the last time I was out of sorts, and there is some left."

"I know," said the Boy. "It is in the cupboard under the stairs on the left hand side."

When the Tenor came back with the Burgundy the Boy settled himself in an easy-chair with a glass on the table beside him, and it was evident that his mood had changed. He was thoughtful for a little, sitting with solemn eyes, looking out at the cathedral opposite.

There was only one rose-shaded lamp left alight in the long low room, and the dimness within made it possible to see out into the clear night and distinguish objects easily.

"When I look out at that great pile and realize its antiquity, I suffer," the Boy said at last. "Do you know what it is, the awful oppression of the ages?"

The Tenor did not answer for a moment, then he said:

"I never see you at church.

"I should think not," the Boy replied, still speaking seriously. "You never see anyone but Angelica."

The Tenor flushed.

"Why do you never speak to that sweet young lady?" the Boy asked tentatively, after a little pause.

"I! How could I?"

"I fancy you ought to," the Boy went on, endeavouring to "draw" the Tenor. "You can't expect her to make up to you, you know."

"Oh, Boy! how can you be so young!" the Tenor exclaimed, with a gesture of impatience, but still amused.

The Boy sipped his wine, and gazed into the glass, delighting in the rich deep colour. "I should think she would be delighted to make the acquaintance of so great an artist," he said.

The Tenor bowed ironically. "May I ask if you are pursuing your investigations as to what manner of man I am?" he asked.

"Well, yes," was the candid rejoinder; "I was. I suppose you think that you ought not to speak without an introduction. Well, say I gave you one."

The Tenor laughed. He felt that he ought to let the subject drop, and at the same time yielded to temptation.

"What would your introduction be worth?" he asked.

"Everything," the Boy rejoined. "I am on excellent terms with Angelica. We have always been inseparable, and I get on with her capitally; and she's not so easy to get on with, I can tell you," he added, as if taking credit to himself.

"When she is good she is very good indeed,
But when she is naughty she is horrid.

And just now she's mostly naughty. She isn't very happy."

The interest expressed in the Tenor's attitude was intensified, and inquiry came into his eyes.

"She is not very happy," the Boy pursued with extreme deliberation, "because you come no nearer."

"Boy, you are romancing," the Tenor said, with a shade of weariness in his voice.

"I am not," the Boy replied. "I know all that Angelica thinks, and it is of you——"

"Hush!" the Tenor exclaimed. "You must not tell me."

"But she——"

"I will not allow it."

"Well, there then, don't bite," said the Boy; "and I won't tell you against your will that she thinks a great deal about you"—this *presto*, in order to get it out before the Tenor could stop him. "But I will tell you on my own account that I don't know the woman who wouldn't."

A vivid flush suffused the Tenor's face, and he turned away.

"I hope you never say things like that to your sister," he objected, after a time.

The Boy grinned. "Sometimes I do," he said, "only they're generally more so."

There was a long silence after this, during which the Tenor changed his attitude repeatedly. He was much disturbed, and he showed it. The Boy made a great pretence of sipping his wine, but he had not in reality taken much of it. He was watching the Tenor, and it was curious how much older he looked while so engaged. The Tenor must have noticed the change in him, which was quite remarkable, giving him an entirely different character, but for his own preoccupation. As it was, however, he noticed nothing.

"Boy," he began at last, in a low voice and hesitating, "I want you to promise me something." The Boy leant forward all attention. "I want you to promise that you will not say anything like that—anything at all about me to——"

"To Angelica?" The Boy seemed to think. "I will promise," he slowly decided, "if you will promise me one thing in return."

"What is it?"

"Will you promise to tell me everything you think about her."

The Tenor laughed.

"You might as well," the Boy expostulated. "I've got to look after you both and see that you don't make fools of yourselves. The youngness of people in love is a caution! And I should like to see Angelica safely settled with you. A man with a voice like yours is a match for anyone. There are obstacles, of course; but they can be got over—if you will trust me."

"Oh, you impossible child!" the Tenor exclaimed.

"It is you who are impossible," the Boy said, in dudgeon. "You are too ideal, too content to worship from afar off as Dante worshipped Beatrice. I believe that was what killed her. If Dante had come to the scratch, as he should have done, she would have been all right."

"Beatrice was a married woman," the Tenor observed.

The Boy shrugged his shoulders, but just then the cathedral clock struck three, and he hastily finished his wine.

"I'll disperse," he said, when the chime was over. "Take care of my fiddle. You'll find the case under the sofa. I left it the last time I was here. By-the-bye, you should make the old woman stay at home to look after the place when you're out. Unscrupulous people might walk in uninvited, you know. Ta, ta," and the Tenor found himself alone.

It was no use to go to bed, he could not rest. His heart burned within him. It was no use to tell himself that the Boy was only a boy. He knew what he was saying, and he spoke confidently. He was one of those who are wiser in their generation than the children of light. And he had said—what was it he had said? Not much in words, perhaps, but he had conveyed an impression. He had made the Tenor believe that she thought of him. He believed it, and he disbelieved it. If she thought of him—he threw himself down on the sofa, and buried his face in the cushions. The bare supposition made every little nerve in his body tingle with joy. He ought not to indulge in hope, perhaps; but, as the Boy himself might have observed, you can't expect much sense from a man in that state of mind.

A few days later the Tenor saw his lady again in the canon's pew, and he was sure, quite sure, she tried to suppress a smile.

"That little wretch has told her, and she is laughing at my presumption," was his distressed conclusion. "I'll wring his neck for him when he comes again."

But when the service was over, and he had taken his surplice off, she passed him in the nave, so close that he might have touched her, and looked at him with eyes just like the Boy when he was shy; gave him a quick half-frightened look, and blushed vividly; gave him time to speak, too, had he chosen. But the Tenor was not the man to take advantage of a girlish indiscretion.

When he went home, however, he was glad. And he opened his piano and sang like one inspired. "I am gaining more power in everything," he said to himself. "I could make a position for her yet."

CHAPTER VIII.

A FEW nights later the Tenor went out for a stroll, leaving the windows of his sitting room closed but not fastened, and the lamp turned down. On his return he was surprised to find the window wide open and the room lit up. The little garden gate was shut and bolted. He could easily have reached over and opened it from the outside, but knowing that it creaked, and not wanting to disturb his nocturnal visitor until he had ascertained his occupation, he jumped over it lightly, walked across the grass plot to the window, and looked in.

It was the Boy, of course. The Tenor recognized him at once, although all he could see of him at first were his legs as he knelt on the floor with his back to him and his head and shoulders under a sofa. "What, in the name of fortune, is he up to now?" the Tenor wondered.

Just then the boy got up, frowning, and flushed with stooping. He stamped his foot impatiently, and looked all round the room in search of something. Suddenly his face cleared. He had discovered his violin on the top of a bookshelf above him, and that was apparently what he wanted, for he made a dash at it, and took it down, and hugged it affectionately.

The Tenor smiled, and stepped down into the room. He did not wish to take his visitor unawares, but the carpet was soft and thick, and his quick step as he crossed to where the boy was standing with his back to him, absorbed in the contemplation of his beloved instrument, made no noise, so that when the Tenor laid his hand on the Boy's shoulder he did startle him considerably. The Boy did not drop his instrument, but he uttered an almost womanish shriek, and faced

round with such a scared white look that the Tenor thought he was going to faint. He recovered immediately, however, and then exclaimed angrily: "How dare you startle me so? Everybody knows I can't bear to be startled. If you are nothing but a blunderer you will spoil everything. And I bolted the gate too. It would have made a noise if you had opened it as you ought to have done, and then I should have known. I've a good mind to go away now, and never come back again."

"I am very sorry," said the Tenor. "But how was I to know it was you? It might have been a thief."

"Thieves don't come to steal grand pianos and armchairs in lighted chambers with the windows open and the blinds up," the Boy retorted. "Don't you feel mean, spying around like that?"

"Are you an American?" the Tenor interrupted blandly.

"Yes, I am"—with asperity—"and you must have known quite well it was me. Who else could get into the Close after the gates were shut?"

"I never thought of that," said the Tenor. "And how *do* you get in, pray? By the postern?"

"No," was the answer. "I come by the water-gate;" and his face cleared as he saw the Tenor's puzzled glance at his garments.

"I'm not wet," he said. "I don't swim."

"But the ferry does not cross after six."

"No, but I do, you see. And now let us make music," he added, his good humour restored by the Tenor's mystification. "If you will be so good as to accompany me with your piano, I will give you a treat. I brought my music the last time I was here;" and there it was, piled up, on a chair beside the instrument.

The Tenor could have sworn that neither chair nor music was there when he went out that evening, but what was the use of swearing? He felt sure that the Boy in his present mood would have outsworn him without scruple had it pleased him to maintain his assertion, so he opened his piano in silence, and the music began. And it was a rare treat indeed which the Tenor enjoyed that night. The Boy played with great technical mastery of the instrument, but even that was not so remarkable as the originality of his interpretations. He possessed that sympathetic comprehension of the masters' ideas which is the first virtue of a musician; but even when he was

most true to it, he managed to throw some of his strong individuality into the rendering, and hence the originality which was the special charm of his playing. As an artist, he certainly satisfied; even the sensitive soul of the Tenor was refreshed when he played; but in other respects he was obviously deficient. So long as things were pleasant it was a question whether he would ever stop to ask himself if they were right. Acts which lead to no bodily evil, such as sickness or that lowering of the system which lessens the power of enjoyment, he was not likely in his present phase to see much objection to; and for the truth, for verbal accuracy in his assertions that is, he had no particular respect. All this, however, the Tenor was more reluctant to acknowledge, perhaps, than slow to perceive. He was one of those who expect a great soul to accompany great gifts, and what he did know of the Boy's shortcomings he condoned. He believed the young tone-poet's power was in itself an indication of high aspirations, and those he thought were only temporarily suppressed by a boyish affectation of cynicism.

But the Boy did not give the Tenor much time to think. His mind was quick-glancing, like his eyes when he was animated, and he carried the Tenor along with him from one occupation to another with distracting glee. When he was tired of making music, as he called it, he demanded food, and, so long as he could cook it and serve it himself, he delighted in bacon and eggs, as much as he did in Bach and Beethoven.

The Tenor tried to wean him of his nocturnal habits, but to this the Boy would not listen. He said he liked to sit up all night, and when he said he liked a thing, he seemed to think he had adduced an unanswerable argument in its favour. The Tenor complained of fatigue. The long nights affected his voice, he said, and made him unfit for work; but the Boy only grinned at this, and told him he'd get used to it. Then he threatened to shut up the house and go to bed if the Boy did not come in proper time, and on one occasion he carried out his threat; but when the Boy arrived he made night hideous with horrid howls until the Tenor could stand it no longer, and was obliged to get up, and let him in, to preserve the peace of the neighbourhood. After which the Tenor ceased to remonstrate, and it became one of the pleasures of his life to prepare for this terrible hungry Boy. He worked in his garden early and late, cultivating the succulent roots which the latter loved, the fruits and the vegetables, and, last, but not

least, the flowers, for he never could feed without flowers, he said, and the Tenor ministered to this exaction with the rest. "He is dainty because he is delicate," the Tenor thought, always excusing him. "When he is older and stronger he will grow out of all these epicurean niceties of taste. I must make him dig, too, and fence, and row. He'll soon develop more manliness."

That he was spoiling the Boy in the meantime never occurred to him, not even when he noticed that the latter took all these kindnesses as a matter of course, and only grumbled when some accustomed attention was omitted.

The Tenor was vexed sometimes, and obliged to find fault, but the Boy could always soothe him. "I am sure you love me," he would say. "Your life was not worth living until I came, and you could not live without me now. I am a horrid little brute I know, but I have my finer feelings too, my capacity for loving, and that raises me.

"All love is sweet
Given or returned."

When the Boy quoted or recited anything he really felt, he had a way of lingering over the words as if each syllable were a pleasure to him. The deep contralto of his voice was at its sweetest then, and he seldom failed to make his own mood felt as he intended.

The Tenor, justly incensed by some wicked piece of mischief, was often obliged to turn away that he might maintain his authority and not be seen to soften. But he never deceived the Boy, who could gauge the effect of his persuasion to a nicety, and would grin like a fiend behind the Tenor's back at the success of his own eloquence. No matter what he had done, by hook or by crook he always managed to bring about a reconciliation before they parted. He knew the Tenor's weak point—Angelica—and when everything else failed he would play upon that unmercifully. But he had a way of speaking of his sister which often made the Tenor seriously angry. He did not believe the Boy meant half the disrespect with which he mentioned her, but it galled him, nevertheless; and, on one occasion, when the Boy had repeated some scandalous gossip to which the Tenor objected, and afterward excused himself by saying that it was not his but his sister's story, the Tenor's indignation overflowed, and he lectured him severely.

"You should never forget that your sister is an innocent girl," he said, "and it is degrading to her even to have her name associated with such ideas."

But the Boy only grinned. "Bless you," he retorted, "don't make so much ado about nothing. She's quite as wise as we are."

The Tenor's eyes flashed. "I call that disloyal," he said. "Even if it were true—and it is not true—it would be disloyal; and I am ashamed of you. If you ever dare to speak of your sister in that light way to me again, I'll thrash you."

For a moment the Boy was astonished by the threat. His jaw dropped, and he stared at the Tenor; but, quickly recovering himself, he burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter. "Oh, my!" he exclaimed. "What a brother-in-law you would be! How do you know she is such a saint?"

"You are a little brute," was all the answer the Tenor vouchsafed. But the question made him think. He could picture her to himself at any time as he saw her in the canon's pew, and the pale proud purity of her face, with the unvarying calm of her demeanour, were assurances enough for him. His dear lady. His delicate-minded girl. He would stop it. He would make this scapegrace brother of hers respect her, even as he had threatened, if necessary.

"Do you know what she calls you?" that youth asked presently, breaking in upon the Tenor's meditation in a confident way, as if he could not be mistaken about the subject of it.

But the Tenor was not to be beguiled all at once. "I have already requested you not to mention your sister to me," he said.

"I know," was the cool rejoinder. "But I promised on my word of honour to tell you what she calls you. She calls you Israfil—Is-ra-fil," he repeated, "the angel of song, you know."

But the Tenor made no sign. The Boy watched him a moment, and then continued unabashed, "I shall call you Israfil myself, I think, for the future. But I like your own name too!" he added. "I have only just found it out. Everybody here calls you the Tenor, you know."

"And how did you find it out, pray, if I may ask?"

"I looked everywhere," said the Boy, glancing round him comprehensively; "and at last I found it on the back of an old envelope that was in that Bible you keep in your bedroom.

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Here it is," and he took it out of his pocket-book. "David Julian Vanetemple, Esq., Haysthorpe Castle, Hays, N. B."

A painful spasm contracted the Tenor's face. "Oh, Boy," he said, in a deep stern voice that made the latter quail for once; "have you no sense of honour at all? You must give that back to me immediately."

The Boy returned it without a word, and the Tenor went upstairs. His step was listless, and when he came back he looked pale and disheartened. He sat down in his accustomed seat beside the fireplace farthest from the window that looked out upon the cathedral, but facing it himself, and rested his elbow on the arm of the chair and his head on his hand, taking no notice of the Boy, however, who waited a while, casting anxious glances at him, and then rose softly and stole away.

When the Tenor roused himself he found a slip of paper on the table beside him, on which was written, "Dear Israfil, I beg your pardon. I did it without thinking. I will never hurt you like that again, only forgive me." And the Tenor forgave him.

On another occasion, when there was peace between them, and they were both in a merry mood, the Boy said he had a grievance, and when the Tenor asked what it was, he complained that the Tenor had never taken interest enough in him to ask him his name.

"No, now you mention it," the Tenor answered. "I never thought of your having a name."

"Do you mean to say you think me such a nonentity?"

"Just the opposite. Your individuality is so strongly marked that you don't seem to require to be labelled like other people. By-the-bye, what is your name?"

"Claude."

The Tenor laughed ironically. "Oh, no," he said, "it is Maude you mean; delicate, dainty, white-fingered Maude."

But the Boy only roared. This kind of insinuation never roused his resentment; on the contrary, it delighted him. "Imagine the feelings of the flowers," he said, with a burst of laughter that convulsed him, "if my remarkable head, sunning over with curls, were to shine out on them suddenly, and want to be their sun!"

"I am afraid you are incorrigible," the Tenor answered. "You seem to glory in being effeminate. If wholesome ridicule has no effect, you'll die an old woman in the opprobrious sense of the word."

"I'll make you respect these delicate fingers of mine, though," the Boy irritably interposed, and then he took up his violin. "I'll make you quiver."

He drew a long melodious wail from the instrument, then lightly ran up the chromatic scale and paused on an upper note for an instant before he began, with perfect certainty of idea and marvellous modulations and transitions in the expression of it, to make music that steeped the Tenor's whole being in bliss.

The latter had noticed before that it was to his senses absolutely, not at all to his intellect, that the Boy's playing always appealed; but he did not quarrel with it on that account, for music was the only form of sensuous indulgence he ever rioted in, and besides, once under the spell of the Boy's playing, he could not have resisted it even if he would, so completely was he carried away. The Boy's white fingers were certainly not out of place at such work. "Do I play like an old woman in the opprobrious sense of the word?" he demanded, mimicking the Tenor.

"Oh, Boy!" the latter exclaimed, with a deep drawn sigh of satisfaction. "You have genius. When you play you are like that creature in the 'Witch of Atlas':

> "A sexless thing it was, and in its growth
> It seemed to have developed no defect
> Of either sex, yet all the grace of both."

But the Boy frowned for a moment at the definition, and then he said: "Is that what you call genius? Now I make it something like that, only different. I believe it is the attributes of both minds, masculine and feminine, perfectly united in one person of either sex."

The Tenor, lolling in his easy-chair, smiled at him lazily. There was no end to his indulgence of the Boy; but still he led him, by example principally, but also by suggestion, as on one occasion when the Boy had been sketching out a scheme of life in which self was all predominant, and the Tenor asked: "Do you never feel any impulse to do something for your suffering fellow-creatures?"

To which the Boy at first rejoined derisively: "Am I not one of the best of their benefactors? Would you say that a fellow who plays as I can does nothing for his fellow-creatures? To make music is my vocation, and I follow it like a man."

But after a moment's thought he confessed: "Once indeed I did try to do some good in the world, but I failed disastrously."

"What did you try?"

"I took a class in a Sunday school." He waited to enjoy the effect of this announcement on the Tenor. "I did, indeed," he protested; "but—eh—I cannot say that success attended the effort. In fact, both I and my class were forcibly ejected from the building before the school closed. You see, I had no vocation, and it was foolish to experiment."

The Tenor said no more on the subject, and did not mean to, but the Boy returned to it himself eventually, and it was evident that the wish to do something for somebody was taking possession of him seriously. This was the Tenor's tactful way with him; and from such slight indications of awakening thought he continued to augur well for the Boy.

CHAPTER IX.

SO time passed on, changing all things greatly, or with infinitesimal changes, according to their nature. The colours worn in crowded thoroughfares varied with the varying fashions; the tint of the summer foliage with sun and rain and dust. Doors, closed the whole long winter, were opened now and left so, and the young people passed to and fro, thronging to river banks, but lately deserted; to the cricket fields, garden, or wood, or lawn. The very faces of the streets were changing, enlivened by plaster and paint and polish: the face of the land with the certain advance of the season; the faces of friends with something not to be named, but visible, strange, and, for the most part, disheartening. It was the old story for ever and ever; all things changed always; but the chime was immutable.

As the days grew gradually to weeks, his one connecting link with the outer world became dearer and dearer to the lonely Tenor. The nights that brought the Boy were happy nights, looked forward to with eagerness, and prepared for with difficulty. For at this time the Tenor denied himself some of the bare necessaries of life, that he might buy him the Burgundy he loved to sip: he did no more than sip, and, therefore, the Tenor indulged him; drink was not to be one of his vices, evidently.

The Tenor, although he would not have acknowledged it, held that the Boy was a creature apart, and one, therefore, whom it was not fair to measure by the common standard. Doubtless the manner of their meeting had something to do with this idea. The Boy was associated in the Tenor's mind with many sweet associations; with the beautiful still night; with the Tenor's far off ideal of all that is gracious and womanly; with the music that was in him; and, further, with a sympathetic comprehension of those moments when gray glimpses of the old cathedral, or a warm breath of perfumed air from the garden, or some slight sound, such as the note of a night bird breaking the silence, fired a train of deep emotion, and set his whole poetic nature quivering, to the unspeakable joy of it; joy sanctified by reverence, and enlarged beyond comparison by love.

With such moods as these the Boy's own mood was always in harmony; so much so indeed that the Tenor thought it was then that he was himself, and that those wild ebullitions of spirits were only affected to disguise some deeper feeling of which, boy-like, he was ashamed. As their intimacy ripened there were times when, not only his whole demeanour, but his very nature seemed to change; when he craved for dimness and quiet; and when he would work upon the Tenor with little caressing ways that won his heart and drew from him, although he was habitually undemonstrative, expressions of tenderness which were almost paternal.

In his quieter moods the Boy would sit in the dim lamplight on a footstool beside the Tenor's chair, leaning his head against the arm of it, while the latter smoked, and the tap, tap, tap, of the clematis and honeysuckle on the window pane kept time to the thoughts of each. Long intervals of silence were natural to the Tenor, and it was generally the Boy who broke the charm. He would talk seriously then, and often about his sister, and was not to be silenced until he had had his say. He conquered the Tenor as usual by his persistence, but the latter was not much influenced by what he said at first. Gradually, however, and by dint of constant iteration, some of the Boy's assertions became impressed upon his mind. He began to believe that Angelica did wish to make his acquaintance, and to admit to himself that there might be a possibility of winning her regard eventually; but his high mindedness shrank from approaching a girl whose social position was so far above his own—in the matter of money that is. For of course

the Tenor had a proper respect for art. He knew that to be a great artist, with the will and power to make his art elevating, is to be great in the greatest way; and he also knew that his own gift was second to none. But would she link her lot with his? He yearned for some assurance. He had no ambition whatever for himself, but he would have toiled to succeed for her. It was his weakness to require someone to work for as he was working for the Boy; a purely personal ambition seemed to him a vexing, vain, and insufficient motive for action. All selfless people suffer from indolence when only their own interests are in question; they require a strong incentive from without to arouse them. Such incentive as the Tenor had was in itself a pleasure to him, a refinement of pleasure which might be coarsened, which certainly would be impaired by any change. He had, however, begun to make plans. He was determined to go and take his place amongst the singers of the world; but when, exactly, he had not decided. As the Boy declared, when it came to the point he found it difficult to tear himself away from Morningquest. Of course he would go, in fact he felt he must go, soon—say, when these drawings for his good friend the dean were finished.

"By the way, Boy," he asked one night, "what is your family name? and who are your people?"

"My family name is Wells," the boy answered demurely. "My father has a little place in the neighbourhood, and my grandfather lives here too."

"Wells," the Tenor repeated. "I seem to know the name."

"Oh, doubtless," the Boy observed. "This is a hotbed of Wellses. Israfil," he pleaded—he was nestling beside the Tenor in the dim half light, watching the latter smoke—"Israfil, tell me all about yourself? Tell me about that old castle in the North to which your letter was addressed. Tell me who you are? I want your sympathy."

"You have it all, dear Boy," the Tenor said.

"I shall not feel that I have until you ask for mine. You would not deny me this if you knew what a stranger I am to the luxury of loving. I want to cultivate the power to care for others. Just now I don't seem to be able to sympathise with anyone for more than a moment, and that is the cause of all you object to in me. But if you would confide in me, if you would make me feel that I am nearer to you than anybody else is, I believe I could be different."

The Tenor reflected for a little. "If I were to make you

my confidant, Boy, would you respect my confidence?" he said at last.

"Assuredly," the Boy replied. "I promise on my honour. You shall tell her yourself."

The Tenor ignored this last impertinence, but the Boy was not abashed. "Israfil," he pursued, "they say you are the son of an actress and some great nobleman, and that when you found it out, your intolerable pride made you give up your profession, and come and bury yourself alive in Morningquest because you could not bear the stigma. Are you the son of such parents, Israfil?"

The Tenor brushed his hand back over his hair. "Has your sister heard these reports?" he asked.

"Yes."

"And what does she say?"

"Oh, *she* doesn't mind! She rather leans to the nobleman theory; and when people of that kind—I mean the nobility and gentry," he exclaimed with a grin—"(the worst of being in society is that you are forced to know so many disreputable people); when they come to our house—and they do come in shoals, Angelica being the attraction, you know—then we speculate. Angelica feels quite sure that the Duke of Morningquest himself is your father. He was a loose old fish, they say. And there is a sort of family likeness between you. Angelica thinks you came here that your presence might be a continual reproach to him."

"Not a very worthy thought," said the Tenor drily.

"Well," said the Boy with much candour. "I could not swear it was Angelica's. It has a strong family likeness to some of my own."

"It has," said the Tenor.

He was lolling in his deep easy-chair with his hands folded on his vest and his legs crossed, and now he laid his sunny head back wearily against the cushion, and looked up at the ceiling. It was his accustomed attitude in moments of abstraction, and the Boy let him alone for a little, watching him quietly. Then he grew impatient, and broke the silence: "*Is* it true, Israfil?" he asked.

"Is what true?" lowering his eyes to look at him without changing his position.

"Is it true that you are the son of an actress and a duke?"

"Probably," the Tenor answered; "anything is probable where the most absolute uncertainty prevails."

"Then you don't know who you are?" the Boy exclaimed, in a tone of deep disgust due to baffled curiosity.

"I haven't the most remote idea," said the Tenor.

"I don't believe you."

"Boy, I have already told you that I will not have my word doubted."

"I know," said the Boy. "You are always autocratic. But I can't believe you don't know who you are. It is incredible. You would never give yourself such airs if you hadn't something to go upon. And, besides, you command respect naturally, as well-bred people do. And you have all the manner and bearing of a man accustomed to good society. You have the accent, too, and all the rest of it The difficulty in your case is to believe in the actress. She was a very superior kind of actress, I suspect. And, at any rate, you must have been brought up and educated by somebody. Do tell me, Israfil. I am burning to know."

"Your curiosity is quite womanish, Boy."

"That is quite the right word," the Boy answered glibly. "Women are generous and elevated, and 'a generous and elevated mind is distinguished by nothing more certainly than an eminent curiosity.'"

The Tenor changed his position slightly, and, in doing so, absently laid his hand on the Boy's head: "What queer dry hair you have," he said.

The Boy drew back resentfully. "I wish you wouldn't touch my hair," he said. "I know it's nasty dry hair. It's a sore point with me. I think you should respect it."

"I beg your pardon," the Tenor answered. "I really didn't know you were so sensitive on the subject. But why on earth do you come so close? You put that remarkable head of yours under my hand, and then growl at me for touching it. And really it is a temptation. If I were a man of science instead of a simple artist I should like to examine it inside and out."

The Boy put both hands up to his head and laughed, delighted as usual by any jest at his own expense. He had moved his footstool back a little now, and sat, stroking his upper lip thoughtfully, and looking at the Tenor. There was a mischievous twinkle in his eyes, and he seemed to have forgotten his desire to know the Tenor's secret history. "Why don't you wear a moustache?" he said suddenly.

The Tenor looked at him lazily. "Well, I never did wear

one," he said. "But I could not in any case have worn one with a surplice."

The Boy nodded his head sagely. "I forgot," he said. "Of course that would have been bad form. A parson is always vulgarized in appearance by wearing a military moustache. The effect is as incongruous as a tail would be if added to a figure with wings. But, tell me, do you think my moustache will be the colour of my eyebrows when it comes?"

"Oh, Boy!" the Tenor exclaimed, "this is quite refreshing; especially from you. You will be quite young in time if you go on."

The Boy grinned in his peculiar way, and then got up and began to walk about the room. The Tenor thought from the expression of his face that he was meditating mischief; but before he had time to put it into effect the big bell boomed above them, striking the hour, and then came the chime.

The Boy hated the chime. He said it was flat; he said it was importunate, like an ill-bred person; he said it mingled inopportunely with everything; he declared it had a spite against him, and would do him an injury if it could; when he was good he said it made him bad, and when he was bad it made him worse. The Tenor had expected to hear him swear at it; but, oddly enough, considering some of his aberrations, the Boy never swore. His ideas were occasionally shocking, but, with the exception of certain *boyishnesses*, in the expression of them he was a purist.

He went off now, however, anathematizing the chime, and the Tenor was almost glad to get rid of him. The Boy's superabundant vitality alone was fatiguing, and when he added, as he often did, a certain something of manner to it which was perplexing and irritating in the extreme, he left the Tenor not only fatigued, but jarred all over. Yet he spent the interval which usually elapsed before the Boy returned in making excuses for him, and also in making preparations.

CHAPTER X.

THE Tenor was obliged to leave the window of his sitting room which looked out on the little grass plot in front of his house and the cathedral opposite, open always now, rain, blow, or snow, for the convenience of the Boy. The latter had changed his mind about forcing an entrance. If the

Tenor, he said, would not make it quite evident that he wanted him by leaving the window open so that he could come in his own way whenever he chose, he should not come at all. The window was his way; and on one occasion when he had found it shut he had gone home, intending, as he afterward declared, never to return; but he had changed his mind and reappeared after an unusually long interval, when the Tenor, to use the Boy's own phrase, "caught it" for his want of hospitality. Of course, he acknowledged, he might have come in by the door, or he might have knocked at the window; but then he did not choose to come in by the door or knock at the window, so that was all about it. If the Tenor wanted to see him he knew how to make him feel he was welcome, and so on until, for the sake of peace and quietness, the Tenor was again obliged to yield.

Oh, the moods of that terrible Boy! No two the same and none to be relied on! Sometimes he was like a wild creature, there was no holding him, no knowing what he would do next; and the Tenor used to tremble lest he should carry out one of his impossible threats, among which serenading the dean, upsetting the chime, climbing the cathedral spire on the outside, or throwing stones at the stained-glass saints in the great west window, were intentions so often expressed that there seemed some likelihood of one or other of them being eventually put into execution. Then again he would saunter in about midnight, and sit down in a dejected attitude, looking unutterably miserable; he would hardly answer when the Tenor spoke to him, and if he did not speak he resented it; neither would he eat, nor drink, nor make music, and if the Tenor sang he sometimes burst into tears.

On other occasions he was the most commonplace creature imaginable. He would talk about a book he had been reading, a new picture his "people" had bought, the society in the neighbourhood; anything, in fact, to which the Tenor would listen, and the latter was often astonished by the acuteness of his perceptions, and the worldly wisdom of his conclusions.

The Tenor made every allowance for these changes of mood, which, if they were trying at times—and certainly they were trying—were interesting also and amusing. He knew what an affliction the sensitive, nervous, artistic temperament is; what a power of suffering it hides beneath the more superficial power to be pleased; and he pitied the Boy, who was an artist

in every sense. He also thought there had been mistakes made in his education.

"Did you ever go to a public school, Boy?" he asked one night.

"Well, no," the Boy rejoined. "I had the advantage of being educated with Angelica. They kindly allowed me to share her tutor. I was thrown in, you understand, just to fill up his time. And that is how it is I am so refined and cultivated."

"But seriously?" said the Tenor.

The Boy raised his eyebrows. "Seriously?" he repeated. "But do you think it delicate to question me so closely? Ah, I see, poor fellow! You don't know any better. But really your curiosity is quite womanish. I will tell you, however. I had the misfortune to sever my femoral artery when I was a brat, and, although it seems to have come quite right now, it was not thought advisable for me to rough it at a public school."

"But why on earth are they putting you in the army?" the Tenor asked.

"You mean I am much too pretty?" said the Boy, "not to mention my brains and manners. Well, there I must agree with you. It does seem a sad waste of valuable material. But it is only to fill up an interval. I shall be put into a permanent billet of another kind eventually, whether I like it or not."

"You mean you will be put into the earth to enrich it, I suppose?"

"Well, no. I was not so smart," said the Boy. "Now, that is rather a good one for you. Oh, I suspect, if I could plumb your depth, I should find myself but a simple, shallow child in comparison. No; what I meant was that eventually a certain amount of earth would come to me to enrich me."

"But what does your father think about this military manœuvre?"

"My father *think!*" roared the Boy. "O Lord! you don't know my father!" and he fairly curled himself up in convulsions of silent laughter, which the Tenor thought unseemly considering the subject of it, but he said no more. He knew that there was nothing to be done with such a boy but to wait and hope; and that was the attitude into which the Tenor found himself most prone to fall in these days with regard to things in general; being greatly cheered meanwhile by the

sight of his lovely lady, who smiled at him now without doubt, and was seldom absent from her accustomed seat in the Canon's pew when he sang.

The Tenor looked better now, and more out of place than ever in the choir—better; that is to say, in the sense of being more attractive; but he was not looking strong, and the common faces about him seemed commoner still when contrasted with the exceptional refinement of his own. The constant self-denial he had been obliged to exercise in order to indulge the fancies of that rapacious Boy, although a pleasure in itself, was beginning to tell upon him. His features had sharpened a little, his skin was transparent to a fault, and the brightness of his yellow hair, if it added to the quite peculiar beauty, added something also to the too great delicacy of his face. It was the brightness of his hair that suggested such names for him as "Balder the Beautiful" and "Son of the Morning" to the Boy, who invariably called him by some such fanciful appellation.

It was at this time, too, that a great painter came to Morningquest and painted a picture called "*Music*," the interest of which centred in the Tenor himself singing, while Angelica gazed at him as if she were spell-bound.

The Boy used to describe this picture to the Tenor while it was in progress, but the latter, listening in his dreamy way, was under the impression for some time that the work was one of his young friend's own imagination only. By degrees, however, it dawned upon him that the picture was an actual fact, and then he was displeased. He thought that the artist had taken a liberty with regard to himself, and been guilty of an impertinence so far as his lovely lady was concerned.

"Well, so I told him," said the Boy. "But you know, dear Israfil, that in the interests of art as well as in the interests of science, men are carried away to such an extent that they sometimes forget to be scrupulous. It is curious," he broke off, gazing at the Tenor critically, "that Angelica should specially admire your chin. It is your mouth that appeals to me. You have a regular Rossitti-Burne-Jones-Dante's-Dream-and-Blessed-Damosel kind of mouth, with full firm lips. I should think you're the sort of fellow that women would like to kiss. Don't try to look as if you wouldn't kiss a woman just once in a way, dear old chap! Women hate men like priests, who mustn't kiss them if they would; and they have no

respect for other men who wouldn't kiss them if they could. I know Angelica hasn't!"

The last words were delivered from outside in the garden after the Boy had made his escape through the window.

CHAPTER XI.

HOW long the Tenor's dream would have remained unbroken by action it is hard to say. His want of personal ambition, his perfect serenity of mind, and his thankfulness for a state of things so much more blissful than anything he had ever expected to fall to his lot again; the languid summer weather, and his affectionate anxiety for the Boy, all combined to keep him in Morningquest, and to keep his indefinite plans for the future still in abeyance.

Other people, however, were not so apathetic. The dean's friendly remonstrances had been redoubled of late; the Boy had become importunate; and even the mild musicians of Morningquest, whose boast it was to have that bright particular star in their own little firmament, ventured to hint respectfully that he was not doing his duty by himself. All this kindly interest in his future career was not without its effect upon him, and if it did not actually rouse him to act, it put him in the mood to be aroused.

He was sitting alone one evening in his accustomed seat beside the fireplace, or rather beside the bank of ferns and flowering plants which he had arranged before the fireplace so as to hide it, at the instigation of the Boy. A shaded lamp stood on a table behind him, throwing its softened light from over his shoulder on to the big book which lay open on his knee. But he was not reading. He had placed his hands upon the book, and was resting his head on the back of the chair. His yellow hair seemed to shine out of the surrounding gloom with a light of its own; but his face was in shadow.

The window at the further end of the room behind him was shut, and the creepers outside brushed gently against it, tapping now and then, and keeping up a continual soft rustle and murmur of leaves, like friendly voices, soothing insensibly.

The other window was open as usual, and as he sat now he could see the old cathedral opposite towering above him. It was a bright moonlight night; the shadows were strong, and the details of the façade, flying buttress, gargoyle and cornice,

with a glimpse of the apse and spire, were all distinct. But as the Tenor thoughtfully perused them, the whole fabric suddenly disappeared from view, blotted out by an opaque body round which the moonlight showed like a rim of silver, tracing in outline the slender figure of the Boy. The Tenor had forgotten him for once, and was startled from his reverie by the unexpected apparition ; but he did not alter his position or make any sign. The Boy preferred to come and go like that, ungreeted and unquestioned, and the Tenor of course humoured this harmless peculiarity with the rest.

The Boy sauntered in now in a casual way, arranged his hair at a mirror, threw himself into an armchair, leant back, crossed his legs, folded both hands on his hat, which he held on his knee, and looked at the Tenor lazily.

In the little pause that followed, the Tenor glanced at his book again, and then he closed it.

"Israfil," the Boy said suddenly, leaning forward to look at the book, as if to make sure, and speaking in an awestruck voice—"is that the *Bible* you were reading?"

Any evidence of the Tenor's simple piety, which was neither concealed nor displayed, because it was in no way affected but quite natural to him, and he was, therefore, unconscious of it, had a peculiar effect upon the Boy. It seemed to shock him. But whether it made him feel ashamed or not, it is impossible to say. Sometimes, the first effect over, he would remain thoughtful, as if subdued by it ; but at others it appeared to have irritated him, and made him aggressively cynical.

To-night he was all subdued.

"You believe it, Israfil, don't you?" he said. "'He watching' is a fact for you?"

The Tenor did not answer, except by folding his hands upon his book again, and looking at the Boy.

"Now, *I* don't believe a word of it," the latter pursued, "but it makes me feel. I have my moments. The Bible is a wonderful book. I open it sometimes, and read it haphazard. I did last night, and came upon—oh, Israfil, the grand simplicity of it all! the wonderful solemn earnestness! It brought me to my knees, and made me hold up my hands ; but I could not pray. I heard the chime, though, that night. It sounded insistent. It seemed to assert itself in a new way. It was as if it spoke to me alone, and I felt a strange sense of something pending—something for which I shall have to answer. 'He watching.' Yes. I feel all that. But"—dejectedly—"one

feels so much more than one knows; and when I want to know, I am never satisfied. Trying to find the little we know amongst the lot that we feel is a veritable search for mignonette seeds in sand."

The Tenor continued silent and thoughtful for a time. "But do you never pray, dear Boy?" he said at last.

The Boy shook his head.

"*Did* you never?"

"Oh, yes,"—more cheerfully. "I used to believe in all the bogies at one time."

"I am afraid you have been brought under some bad influence, then. Tell me, who was it?"

"Angelica," said the boy.

"Oh, Boy! your sister!"

"Ah, you don't know that young lady!" the Boy rejoined, with his cynical chuckle. "She is very fascinating, I allow; but always, in her conversation, 'the serpent hisses where the sweet bird sings.'"

The Tenor toyed with the cover of his book, and was silent.

After a time the Boy spoke diffidently. "But do *you* pray, Israfil?" he asked.

"Yes," the Tenor answered. "I try to make prayer the attitude of my mind always—I mean I try to be, and to do, and to think nothing that I could not make a subject of prayer at any time. But I do not think that a direct petition is the only or best way to pray. It seems to me that it is in a certain attitude of mind we find the highest form of prayer, a reverential attitude toward all things good and beautiful, by which we attain to an inexpressible tenderness, that enemy of evil emotions, and also to rest and peace and a great deep solemn joy which is permanent."

"I don't think I ever knew a man before who prayed regularly," the Boy observed thoughtfully, rising as he spoke, and standing with his hat on: "except the clergy, I suppose. But then that is their profession, and so one thinks nothing of it. But I wonder if many men of the world pray? I suppose they have to give up everything that makes life pleasant before they can conscientiously begin."

"Far from it," said the Tenor, smiling. "But you are going early! Aren't you hungry?"

The Boy grinned as if the insinuation were flattering. "No, I am not hungry," he answered. "I dined at home to-night for a wonder, and when I do that I don't generally want any

more for some time. By home I mean at my grandad's, where they always have seven or eight courses, and I can't resist any of them. I lose my self-respect, but satisfy my voracity, which has the effect of improving the greediness out of my mind. But I am in a hurry this evening, and I have already outstayed my time. I only came in for a moment to ask you if you are to sing to-morrow?"

The Tenor nodded.

"In that case I am to beg you for 'Waft her, Angels.' Angelica ventures to make the request. Good-night!"

The words were scarcely spoken, and his flying footsteps were still audible as he ran lightly up the Close, when the cathedral clock began to strike. There was only one emphatic throb of the iron tongue, followed by a long reverberation, and then came the chime.

The Tenor, who had risen, stood listening, with upturned face, until the end.

But the chime failed of its effect for once. There was something weary and enigmatical in the old worn strain. Hitherto, it had always been a comfort and an assurance to him, but to-night, for the first time, it was fraught with some portentous meaning. Was there any cause for alarm in what was happening? any reason for fear that should make it merciful to prepare him with misgivings? It was no new thing for the Tenor to be asked to sing something special, and he tried to think such a request, although it came from Angelica—if indeed it came from her, and was not a fabrication of the Boy's—was a whim as trifling as the rest. But even if it were, trifles, as all the world knows, are not to be despised. Someone has said already that they made up the sum of life, and it may also be observed that the hand of death is weighted by them.

CHAPTER XII.

THE Tenor happened to be entering the cathedral next day for the afternoon service just as Angelica was being handed from a carriage by a singular looking man who wore *pince-nez*, was clean shaven, and had an immense head of hair. Angelica very evidently called the attention of this gentleman to the Tenor as he passed, and the latter heard the "Ach!" of satisfaction to which the stranger gave utterance when he had

adjusted his *pince-nez* with undisguised interest, and taken the Tenor in.

The latter felt that he had seen the man before, and while he was putting on his surplice he remembered who he was, an *impresario*, well-known by sight to regular opera goers and musicians generally. Having established his identity, the reason of his presence there that afternoon was at once apparent. The Tenor had been requested to sing a solo which was admirably calculated to display the range and flexibility of his voice to the best advantage, and the *impresario* had been brought to hear him. The mountain had come to Mahomet.

The Tenor never sang better than upon that occasion, and he had scarcely reached his cottage after the service was over, when the *impresario* burst in upon him, having, in his eagerness, omitted the ceremony of knocking. He seized the Tenor's hand, exclaiming in broken English:—"Oh, my tear froind, you are an ideal!" Then he flung his hat on the floor, and curvetted about the room, alternately rubbing his hands and running his fingers upward through his luxuriant hair till it stood on end all over his head. "And have I found you?" he cried sentimentally, apostrophising the ceiling. "Oh, have I found you? What a *Lohengrin!* Ach Gott! it is the prince himself. Boat"—and he stopped prancing in order to point his long forefinger at the Tenor's chest—"boat you are an actor born, my froind! You was the *Prince of Devotion* himself jus' now. You do that part as if you feel him too! Why"—jerking his head towards the cathedral with a gesture which signified that if he had not seen the thing himself he never could have believed it—"why, you loose yourself in there kompletely!" Then he asked the Tenor to sing again, which the Tenor did, being careful, however, not to give his excitable visitor too much lest the intoxicating draught should bring on a fit.

The music-mad-one had come to make the Tenor golden offers, and he did not leave him now until the Tenor had agreed to accept them.

The dean came in by chance in time to witness the conclusion of the bargain, adding by his congratulations and good wishes to the Tenor's own belief that such an opportunity was not to be lost. The drawings the Tenor had been doing for the dean were all but finished now, and it was arranged that the Tenor should enter upon his new engagement in one month's time.

When he found himself alone at last and could think the matter over, he was thoroughly content with what he had done. There could be no doubt now as to whose wish it was that he should go and make a name for himself, and he felt sure that the step he was about to take would not lead to the separation he dreaded, but rather to the union for which he might at last without presumption, after such encouragement, venture to hope.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FEW nights after the Tenor had signed the agreement the Boy burst in upon him, exclaiming in guttural accents: "Oh, my tear froind! have I found you?" Then he threw his hat on the floor and began to prance up and down, waving his hands ecstatically.

The Tenor picked up a cushion and threw it at him. "You wretched Boy!" he said, laughing. "Who told you he did that?"

"Oh, my *dear* Israfil!" the Boy replied. "Why on earth do you ask who *told* me? You must know by this time, and if you don't you should, that genius does not require to be told. Given the man and the circumstances, and we'll tell you exactly what he'll do, don't you know," and the Boy showed his teeth.

But the Tenor was not convinced. "Knowing your patience and zeal when engaged in the pursuit of knowledge—I think that was the euphemism you employed the last time you had to apologize for the unscrupulous indulgence of your boundless curiosity," the Tenor, standing with his back to the Boy, observed with easy deliberation, as he filled and lighted a pipe, "I have little doubt that you assisted at the interview from some safe coigne of 'vantage—to borrow another of your pet expressions—perhaps from the closet under the stairs there——"

"Or from behind the sofa," the Boy suggested, with that enigmatical grin of his which the Tenor disliked, perhaps because it was enigmatical. "Like my new suit, Israfil?" he demanded in exactly the same tone. He had on a spotless flannel boating suit, with a silk handkerchief of many colours, knotted picturesquely round his neck.

"It's too new," said the Tenor. "It looks as if you'd got it for private theatricals, and taken great care of it."

The Boy laughed, and then, assuming another character, he began to remonstrate with himself playfully in the Tenor's voice.

"Boy, will you never be more manly?" and "Don't mock, Boy!" and "Boy, you have no soul!" and "Oh, Boy, you're not high-minded." Then he did a love scene between the Tenor and Angelica. The Tenor tried to stop this last performance, but he only made matters worse, for the Boy argued the question out in Angelica's voice, taking the part of "dear Claude"—he still insisted that his name was Claude—and ending with: "Dear Israfil, we are so happy ourselves, I think Claude should have a little latitude to-night. He studies so hard, poor boy, he deserves some indulgence."

When this amusement ceased to divert him, he announced his intention of going on the stage, of not going home till morning, and of being rowed down the river in the meantime.

"But where will you get a boat at this time of night?" the Tenor objected.

"You're not a man of much imagination," said the Boy, "or you wouldn't have asked such a question. How do you suppose I come every night, after all the world is barred and bolted out of your sacred Close, and the alternative lies between the porter at the postern, whom you know I shun, and the water-gate?"

"Do you mean to say you row yourself down the river, every time you come?"

"I do," said the Boy complacently.

"I didn't think you could!" was the Tenor's naïve ejaculation.

The Boy was delighted. "It never struck you, I suppose," he chuckled, "that my fragile appearance might be delusive? Haven't you noticed I never tire?"

"Yes," said the Tenor. "But I thought that you probably paid for these nights of dissipation by days of languor."

The Boy laughed again. "Don't know the sensation," he declared. "Days of laziness would be nearer the mark. I have plenty of them."

It was a lovely night, all pervaded by the fragrance of the flowers in the gardens round about the Close.

They sauntered out, turning to the left from the Tenor's cottage, the cathedral being on their right, the cloisters in front. The Boy walked up to the latter and peeped in. "Come here, dear Israfil," he said obligingly, "and I will show

you the beauties of the place. These are the cloisters, and, as you see, they form a hollow square, nearly two hundred feet long, and twelve feet wide. Yon slowly rising moon shows the bare quadrangle in the centre, and the tracery of the windows opposite; but the exquisite groining of the roof, and the quaintly sculptured bosses, are still hidden in deep darkness. The light, however, brightens in the northeast corner, and—if you weren't in such a *hem* hurry, Israfil——" The Tenor had walked on, but the Boy stayed where he was, and now began to improve the occasion at the top of his voice.

The Tenor returned hurriedly. "For Heaven's sake hold your tongue!" he expostulated. "You'll wake the whole Close."

"I was calling your attention to the details of the architecture," the Boy rejoined politely; and, as usual, for the sake of peace and quietness, the unfortunate Tenor was obliged to hear him out.

When he stopped, the Tenor exclaimed "Thank Heaven!" devoutly, then added, "No fear for your exams, Boy, if you can cram like that. But I did not know you were a cultivated archæologist."

"Nor am I," said the Boy with a shiver. "I hate architecture, and I don't want to know about it, but I can't help picking it up. It is horrid to remember that that arch yonder was built in the time of William the Conqueror. I never look at it without feeling the oppression of the ages come upon me. And when I get into this bigoted Close and think of the heathenish way the people live in it, shutting themselves in from the rest of the citizens with unchristian ideas of their own superiority, I am confirmed in my unbelief. I feel if there were any truth in that religion, those who profess it would have begun to practise its precepts by this time; they would not be content to teach it for ever without trying it themselves. And oh!"—shaking his fist at the cathedral—"I loathe the deeds of darkness that are done there in the name of the Lord."

"What unhappy experience are you alluding to, Boy?" said the Tenor, concerned.

"I was thinking of Edith—poor Edith Beale," the Boy replied. "But don't ask me to tell you that story if you have not heard it. It makes my blood boil with indignation."

"I have heard it," the Tenor answered sadly. "But, Boy, dear, every honest man deplores such circumstances as much as you do."

"Then why do they occur?" the Boy asked hotly. "If the honest men were in earnest, such blackguardism would not go unpunished. But don't let us talk about it."

They went through the arm of the Close in the centre of which the lime trees grew round a grassy space enclosed from the road by a light iron railing. "This is grateful!" the Boy exclaimed, as they passed under the old trees, lingering a while to listen to the rustle and murmur of the leaves. Then they emerged once more into the moonlight, and took their way down the little lane that led to the water-gate. Here they found an elegant cockle-shell of a boat tied up, "a most lady-like craft," said the Tenor.

"I'll steer," said the Boy, fixing the rudder, and then arranging the cushions for himself, while the Tenor meekly took the oars.

With one strong stroke he brought the boat into mid-stream, then headed her down the river toward the sea, and settled to his oars with a long steady pull that roused the admiration of the Boy.

"You row like a 'Varsity man," he said.

"So I should," was the laconic rejoinder.

"*Are* you a 'Varsity man?"

"I am."

"Oxford, then, I'll bet. And did you take your degree?"

The Tenor nodded.

"Well, you *are* a queer chap!" said the Boy. "Were you expelled? The Tenor shook his head. "Did you do *anything* disgraceful?" The Tenor again made a sign of negation. "Then why on earth did you come and bury yourself alive in Morningquest?"

"That I might have the pleasure of rowing you down the river by moonlight, apparently," the Tenor answered, but without a smile.

"I'd give my ears to know!" the Boy ejaculated.

"I quite believe you would!" said the Tenor, pausing to speak; after which he bent to his oars with a will, and the banks became a moving panorama to their vision as they passed. Now they swept under a light iron bridge that crossed the river with one bold span, and connected a busy thoroughfare of the city with a pleasant shady suburb beyond. Then they wound round a curve, and on their left was a broad towing-path, and beautiful old trees, and a high paling made of sleepers shutting out the view; while on the right, those

crowded dwellings of the poor which add so much to a picture, especially by moonlight, and so little to the loveliness of life, rose from the water's edge and straggled up the rising ground, tumbling over each other in every sort of picturesque irregularity. Ahead of them, the river was landlocked by a wooded hill; and, also facing them, was an old round tower on the towing-path, above which the round moon shown in an empty indigo sky.

"Stop a minute, Israfil," said the Boy, "and turn your head. Who does it make you think of?"

"Old Chrome," the Tenor answered, looking over his shoulder. "It is perfect."

The river was quite narrow here, and on either side were long lines of pleasure-boats moored to the bank, and an occasional flat tied up for the night, with its big brown sails, looking like webbed wings, hoisted to dry. Further on they met a barge coming up the river, and the Boy wished the man who was steering a polite good-night, and hoped he'd have a pleasant passage and no bad weather; to which piece of facetiousness the bargee replied good-humouredly, having mistaken the boy's contralto for a woman's voice, an error of judgment at which the latter affected to rage, much to the amusement of the Tenor.

But they were out of the city by this time. On their right was a gentleman's park, well-wooded, and sloping up from the river to a gentle eminence crowned by a crest of trees; on their left, across some fields, the villas of that pleasant suburb before mentioned studded the rising ground, appearing also among old trees, beneath which they and their quiet gardens nestled peacefully. There were trees everywhere—beech and laburnum and larch, horsechestnut and lime and poplar, as far as the eye could reach, and the latter, standing straight up in the barer spots, were a notable feature in the landscape, as were also the alder-cars and occasional osier beds dotted about in marshy places.

The pleasant suburb straggled out to an ancient village, past which a reach of the river wound, but the Boy kept the boat to the main stream. They could see the village street, however, with the quaint church on the level; and light warm airs brought them odours of roses and mignonette from the gardens. It had been a long pull for a hot night, and the Tenor shipped his oars here, and threw himself back in the bow to rest. He lay looking up at the sky while they drifted back

little by little with the tide. The balmy air, the lop-lop of the water against the boat, the rock and sway and sense of dreamy movement, and ever and anon the nightingales, made a time of soft excitement, such as the Boy loved.

"O Israfil!" he burst out; "isn't it delicious just to be alive?"

He was lolling in the stern with his hat off, his legs stretched out before him, and a tiller rope in each hand, the image of indolent ease. "Yes, this is perfect," he added; "it is paradise."

"Not for you, I should think," said the Tenor, "without an Eve."

"Now, there you mistake me," the Boy replied. "If there be one thing I deprecate more than another it is the impertinent intrusion of *sex* into everything."

"You surprise me," the Tenor answered idly. "When I first had the pleasure of meeting you, love was a favourite topic of yours."

"Ah! at that time, yes," said the Boy. "You see I was merely pandering then to what I supposed to be your taste, in order to ingratiate myself with you; but you may have noticed that since I knew you better I have allowed the subject to drop—except, of course, when I wanted to draw you."

"That is true," said the Tenor upon reflection. "And yet you are the most sensuous little brute I know."

"Sensuous, yes; not sensual," said the Boy. "I take my pleasures daintily, and this scene satisfies me heart and soul; balmy air; moonlight with its myriad associations; a murmurous multitude of sounds like sighs, all soothing; the silent drift and gentle rocking of the boat; and the calm human fellowship, the brotherly love undisturbed by a single violent emotion, which is the perfection of social intercourse to me. I say the scene is hallowed, and I'll have no sex in my paradise." The last words were uttered irritably, and he sat up as he spoke, thrust his hands into his pockets, and frowned at the silvery surface of the river. "Love!" he ejaculated. "Rot! It is not love they mean. But don't let us desecrate a night like this with any idea that lowers us to the level of a beastly French novel reeking with sensuality."

"Amen, with all my heart," said the Tenor lazily. "But don't introduce the disturbing element of violence either, dear Boy. Your sentiments may be refined, but the same cannot be said for the expressions in which you clothe them. In fact, to

describe the latter, I don't think *coarse* would be too strong a word."

"No, not coarse," said the Boy, with his uncanny grin. "Vigorous, you mean, dear. But now shut up. I want to think."

"You don't. You want to feel," said the Tenor.

The Boy threw his cap at him.

Then they resettled themselves, lolling luxuriously, the one in the bows, the other in the stern; and the Tenor's soul was uplifted, as was the case with him in every pause of life, to the heaven of heavens which only could contain it; while the Boy's roamed away to realms of poesy where it revelled amid blossoming rhymes, or rested satisfied on full blown verses, some of which he presently began to chant to himself monotonously.

"I like that," he broke off at last. "There is quite an idea in it—well worked out too; don't you think so?"

"What is the thing?" the Tenor asked. "Who wrote it?"

"I wrote it myself," said the Boy.

The Tenor roused himself, and got out the oars, but sat resting on them with a far-away look in his dreamy eyes. He was bareheaded, and the moon played on his yellow hair, making it shine; a detail which did not escape the Boy, whose pleasure in the Tenor's beauty never tired.

"I didn't know you were a poet as well as a musician," the latter said at last.

"Ah! you have much to learn," the Boy answered complacently, then added—"I am extremely versatile."

"Jack of all trades," said the Tenor.

"Now, don't be coarse," said the Boy.

"Well, I hope that is not the best specimen of your powers in that line," the Tenor drily pursued.

"By no means," was the candid rejoinder; "but the most appropriate, seeing that I just made it for the occasion, which is not a great occasion, don't you know."

"I've heard something very like it before," said the Tenor.

"Yes," said the Boy, with a gratified smile, "that is the beauty of it. There is no new-fangled nonsense about me. My verses always tremble with agreeable reminiscences. They set the sensitive sympathetic chords of memory vibrating pleasurably. You can hardly read anything I write without being reminded of some one or other of your best friends in the language. I have written some verses which I can assure

you were a triumph of this art." He made an artistic pause here, shook his head, and then ejaculated solemnly: "But, Lord! how I did rage when the fact was first pointed out to me!"

The Tenor got the boat round, and, with an occasional dip of the oars to keep it in mid-stream, allowed it to drift slowly back toward Morningquest.

"I am afraid you are precocious, Boy," he said at last. "Don't be so if you can help it. The thing is detestable."

"I really think I shall be obliged to avoid you, Israfil," the Boy rejoined. "If I let you be intimate, you will be giving me good advice. Look there!"

The Tenor turned hastily. But there was nothing wrong. It was only that they had reached a point from which they could obtain a view that pleased the Boy's excitable fancy; a bend of the river, a glimpse of upland meadows, woods with the cathedral spire above them, and the square outline of the castle overhanging the city from its dominant site on the hill, and seeming to guard it as it slept.

The Tenor looked a little, then dipped his oars and rowed a stroke or two. The Boy's mood had changed. He was keenly susceptible to the refining influences of beautiful scenes. His countenance cleared and softened as he gazed, and the Tenor knew that he would jeer no more that night.

Presently they heard the city clocks striking the hour. Both listened, waiting for the chime. The Tenor rested on his oars, and after it had sounded, muffled by distance, but quite distinct, he still sat so, gazing thoughtfully into the water.

"Boy, shall I tell you something?" he said at last.

The Boy gravely responded with a nod.

"It was not far from where we are now," the Tenor continued, "that I first heard the chime—oh, ever so many years ago!" and he brushed his hand back over his hair.

"You were a boy then?"

"Yes, a lad like you—perhaps younger. I had been working in a colliery. The work was too hard for me, and I was coming up the Morne on a barge, to try and get something lighter to do in one of the towns. We came up very slowly, and it was a hot day, and I idled about for hours, looking at the water over the side, and at the banks of the river as we passed, but without thinking of anything. What I saw made me feel. I was conscious of various sensations—pleasure, wonder, amusement, and, above all, of a dreamful ease; but I

could not translate sensations into words at that time; they suggested no ideas. There had been nothing in my life so far to rouse my mental faculties, and I was conscious without being intelligent, as I suppose the beasts of the field are. I must have been happy then, but I did not know it. As we approached Morningquest I heard the chime. It was very faint at first, for we were still a long way off; but the next time it sounded we were nearer; and the next it was quite distinct. And it seemed to me to mean something, so I asked the old bargee who was steering, and he told me. I could neither read nor write at that time, and I had never heard of Christ, but I loved music, and the idea of a great beneficent being who slumbered not nor slept, but watched over us all forever, took possession of my imagination, and I caught up the notes and words and sang them with all my heart. And when we got to the outskirts of the city, a gentleman who had been sitting on the towing-path, sketching the old houses on the opposite side of the river, heard me, and hailed the barge, and came on board. 'Which is your sweet singer?' he asked, and the old fellow who was steering nodded toward me, and answered: 'The lad there.' And the gentleman said if I would go away with him he would have me taught music and make a great singer of me."

"And you went?"

"Yes," said the Tenor, with his habitual gesture.

"The gentleman was a bachelor," he resumed, "with few near relations. He was very rich, very liberal, and passionately fond of art in all its branches. That was why he took me at first, but by and by he began to like me for myself. He had me educated as his own son might have been, and I loved him as if he had been my father. Oh, Boy, he was a good man! You never would have scoffed at religion and truth had you been brought up by him. I rested on his affection as securely as you rely on the obligation of your nearest of kin. I knew that, even if I had lost my voice or otherwise disappointed him, it would have made no difference. Once my friend he would always have been my friend. But I did not lose my voice, nor did I otherwise disappoint him, I trust." The Tenor paused a moment. "He was always sure that I was gentle by birth," he resumed, "and all my tutors said I must have come of an educated race because I was so teachable. Everything in the new life came to me naturally. I never had any trouble. My friend tried hard to find my par-

ents, but all that was known of me in the place I came from was that a collier, who lived alone in a little cottage, went home late one night and found me asleep on his bed. They thought I was only a few days old then, and had kept my clothes, which were such as a gentleman's child would have worn, but there was no mark on any of them, nor any clue by which I could be identified, except the name, David Julian Vane-temple, scrawled on a scrap of paper in a woman's hand, an educated hand. The collier brought me up somehow, though Heaven alone knows how, considering my age and his own occupation. Do you know, Boy, one of the most weary things in life is the sense of an obligation you can never repay. If I could only have done something to prove my gratitude to my first foster father! But there! I must not think of it. It is better to hope that all he did for me was a pleasure to himself at the time, though there must have been much more trouble than pleasure at first. But he was very kind, and I was very happy with him." Here the Tenor paused again for a while, and then resumed. "When I was old enough he took me down to the pit occasionally, but he would not let me work until I was much past the age at which the other boys began. He said I was not one of them; my build was different, and I was quite unfit for such rough labour; and so it proved, but I persevered as long as he lived. It was not very long, however, for he was killed one day by an explosion of gas down in the mine while trying to rescue some other poor fellows who had been blocked up in a gallery for days by a fall. His dog was killed at the same time. He liked to have his family with him, he said, and we were generally both beside him when he was at work. But he sent me off on an impossible errand to a neighbouring town that day. I did not suspect it at the time, but I know now that it was to keep me out of harm's way. And so I was left quite alone in the world, and I thought the place where I had had a friend was more desolate than strange places with which I had no such tender associations would be; and so I wandered away, and wandered about until I was found by my next friend on the barge, and the new life began for me."

"Then he never found out who you were?" the Boy exclaimed.

"No, never."

"And why did you leave him?"

The Tenor shipped his oars. "He had a place in Scotland

to which we went every autumn for shooting," he began to answer indirectly, and then stopped.

The Boy was leaning forward, with his eyes riveted on the Tenor's face; his delicate features were pale and drawn with excitement and interest; his lips were parted; he scarcely seemed to breathe. There was a long pause. The moonlight still streamed down upon them. The water lapped against the sides of the boat, and sparkled and rippled all around them, its murmurs mingling with the rustle of leaves, the sighing of sleeping cattle, the manifold "inarticulate voices of the night," above which a nightingale in a copse hard by sang out at intervals divinely.

"My friend was not conventional in anything," the Tenor began again at last. "When he went out shooting, for instance, he liked to find his own game as he would have had to do in the wilds. All the sport of the thing lay in that, he said; it was just the difference between nature and artifice. We were therefore in the habit of going out alone—that is to say, with a keeper or two and the dogs, but never with a party." Here again the Tenor paused, and all the minor murmurs of the water and from the land sounded aggressively, with that sort of sound which fills the ears but seems nevertheless to emphasize the silence and solitude at night.

The Boy moved restlessly once or twice, making the little boat rock, and the Tenor, yielding to the eager expectancy he saw in his eyes, resumed his story.

"Toward the end of the season of which I have been speaking," he said, "we had arranged an expedition for one particular morning; but just as we were about to start my friend got a telegram from a man he knew, begging him as a favour to be at home that day to receive a yachting party who were anxious to come up and see the place, and had only a few hours to do it in. I wanted to stay and help him to entertain them, but he would not hear of it. My day's shooting was of more consequence to him than the entertainment of many guests, and he made me go alone. But I went reluctantly. I had been out alone often enough before, and had enjoyed it thoroughly, but that day, somehow, I hated to leave him, and only went to please him, he made such a point of it. Once fairly started, however, I began, as was natural, to enjoy the tramp over the moors. We intended to send back for any game we might shoot, so only one old gillie accompanied me. I carried out the plans we had made the night before, going the way we had

intended to go. It was deer I was after, and as luck would have it I had some splendid sport, and had begun to enter into it thoroughly before we halted to refresh ourselves at noon. After a long rest we set off again up a wooded glen. The keeper had noticed a herd of deer only the day before feeding at the other side, and it seemed more than probable that we should get a shot when we reached the brow of the hill, or we might perhaps meet some of them coming down the glen to drink. The afternoon was waning then, and we had turned our faces homeward. When we got to the head of the glen the luck seemed still to be favouring us, for there, on our right, was a splendid fellow lording it alone on the very crest of the hill within range. I did not stop to consider, but raised my gun to my shoulder and fired instantly. But just as I pulled the trigger, someone sprang up from the heather between me and the stag—sprang up, uttered a cry, and reeled and fell"—the last words were spoken with a gasp, and the Tenor stopped for an instant, and then continued in a hoarse broken whisper to which his companion had to listen intently, leaning forward to do so, with his great eyes dilated, and his pale lips quivering. "'Lord, sir,' the gillie exclaimed, 'you've shot the master!'"

"And you had?"

"I had. Yes, I had shot him," the Tenor repeated.

"O Israfil!" cried the Boy, flinging himself down impetuously before him, and grasping his hands.

"When his guests had gone," the latter continued in a broken voice, "he strolled out to meet me. He had not said anything about coming, but he knew I meant to return by that glen. He did not, however, know on which side I should be, and he had therefore taken up his position on the brow of the hill from whence he could see every point at which I was likely to appear. Probably he never saw the stag—it was behind him; and we—the gillie and I—neither of us saw anything else. And, indeed, had there been no game, we could hardly have distinguished him at that time of the day from the hillside till he moved, for the suit he wore was just the colour of the rocks and heather. We carried him home—but he was dead—dead—quite dead," and the Tenor moaned, covering his face with his hands.

"I remember now," the Boy said softly. "I heard all about it at the time, and read the case in the papers, but I never thought of associating it with you. Yet—how could I have

been so dull? There was an inquest, and they tried——" he hesitated.

"They tried to make out that I had some motive—something to gain by his death," the Tenor went on; "but everyone, and most of all his nearest of kin, his heir, came forward to exonerate me. He had provided for me in his will by settling the allowance he always made me on me and my heirs forever. But he always said that my voice was my fortune, and he had no need to make enemies for me by giving me that which belonged by right to others. He was a just man, singularly open in all his dealings, and it was not hard to clear me, but still—oh!"—he broke off—"it was awful! awful!"

"And afterward?" the Boy ventured to ask.

"Afterward," the Tenor repeated slowly. "Afterward—for some months—I wandered about. They were all very kind. They wanted me to stay with them—they wanted to take me abroad—they would have done anything to help and comfort me. But all I cared for was to be alone. At first there was a blank—the faces about me had no meaning for me—the people when they spoke could scarcely make me understand. I was mad in a way, but not mad enough to be insensible to sorrow. I felt the fearful calamity that had fallen upon me, but nothing else. I told myself every hour of the day that he was dead—dead; cruelly cut off in the midst of his happy life by me whom he loved—I could not have suffered more had I been guilty," the Tenor broke off. "This lasted—I hardly know how long; but eventually I began to fancy that he saw my agony of grief, and that it was a torment to him not to be able to come and comfort me. Then one day—I was in Cornwall at the time—sitting on the sea shore—and all at once—it was the strangest thing in life—I heard the chime! I had not been thinking of it. I doubt if I had thought of it a dozen times since I heard it first. But it sounded for me then:

I heard it quite distinctly, and I got up and looked about me. It was the first thing outside myself that had arrested my attention since I had seen him drop on the moor. I went back to the inn I was staying at, and asked about it; but I could

scarcely make them understand what I meant, and there was certainly no such chime in that neighbourhood. Then I felt it was a message sent specially to me, and I made my man pack up my things, and then I dismissed him, and started at once for Morningquest alone. It was a long journey, and although I travelled with all possible speed, I did not arrive until nearly forty-eight hours later. It was close on midnight then, and the first thing I heard, when I found myself alone in my room at the hotel, was the chime itself. Have you ever noticed—or is it only my fancy ?—that it seems to strike louder at midnight, and with greater intensity of expression, as we ourselves strike final chords ? It sounded so to me then, and suggested something—I can't tell what, I can't define it ; but something that changed the current of my thoughts, and made me feel I had done right to come. And from that moment my grief was less self-centred, and the blessed power to feel for others began to return to me. Almost immediately after my arrival, I heard of the tragedy in the cathedral, the suicide of the tenor, and the trouble the dean and chapter were having to find a substitute ; and when I had seen the quiet shady Close, and the beautiful old cathedral, and my little house with its high-walled garden at the back, standing, as it were, on holy ground, I longed to take up my abode there, where no one would know my story but those to whom the secret would be sacred, and no one would intrude upon my grief. So I applied for the tenor's place, and I knew as soon as I had taken the step that it was a wise one. I thought, if anything could restore the balance of my mind, it would be the regular employment, the quiet monotony, the something to do that I must do, the duty and obligation, which were just sufficient without being any tax on my powers to take me out of myself. And the being able to shut myself up from the world in the Close, as I said before, was another inducement, though by far the greatest were the daily services in the cathedral ; while taking part in them I always feel that I am nearer him. When I applied for the place, and the dean heard who I was—of course, he knew the story ; the whole world knew it at that time—and heard how I yearned for a life of devotion, he sympathized with me entirely, gladly acceded to my request, and agreed to keep my secret. He has told me since that he always hoped and believed the quiet regular life would restore me, and when it had he intended to urge me to go away, and make the most of my powers. Dear, kind old man ! he has indeed been a good

friend to me, and he is a good man himself, if ever there were one. But I seem to have known none but good men," the Tenor concluded thoughtfully.

"But your money, Israfil," the Boy said impatiently; "what did you do with that?"

The question provoked the ghost of a smile. "Oh, Boy! that is so like you!" the Tenor answered. "But since you wish to know I will tell you. My income has all been disposed of for some years to come. It was a great deal more than I should have required in any case, and a lay clerk with such means would have been an anomaly not to be tolerated. But he meant that I should enjoy it, and so I have. I have held it as a sacred trust left to me for the benefit of those who are worse off than myself. I keep the principal in my own hands, but I dispose of the interest. It does not go very far, alas! in my profession, where want is the rule, but it enables me to do something, and that, till I knew you, Boy, was my greatest pleasure in life. I have earned my own living almost ever since I came to Morningquest, and being obliged to do so has been a very good thing for me."

"And all these pensioners—or whatever you like to call them—of yours, do they know?"

"As a rule my lawyers manage the business delicately," the Tenor answered, smiling. He dipped his oars as he spoke, and began to row back with a will.

The Boy, shivering as if with cold, gathered up the tiller lines and steered mechanically. They were both subdued, and scarcely spoke till the boat touched the landing place at the water-gate, and then the Boy begged the Tenor to get out, saying that he must row himself home.

The Tenor jumped ashore, and then, with a long grip of each other's hands, and a long look into each other's eyes, they parted in silence.

The moon had set by this time, and the summer dawn was near.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE next night the Boy appeared again in his white boating suit, with his sandy hair tumbled more than usual. His restless eyes sparkled and glanced, and there was a glow beneath his clear skin which answered in his to a heightened colour in other complexions. He was evidently excited about

something, and the Tenor thought he had never seen him look so well. What his mood was did not become immediately apparent. The Tenor had learnt that the sparkle in his eyes either meant some mischievous design, or a strong desire to "make music." But this evening he was long in coming to the point. He began by pelting the Tenor with roses through the window, and then he entered and danced an impromptu breakdown in the middle of the room; but these preliminaries might have been an introduction to anything, and it seemed as if his programme were not complete, for he next subsided into his accustomed seat on the sofa up against the wall opposite the fireplace, and remained there, with his hands in his pockets, looking at the Tenor thoughtfully for at least ten minutes.

The Tenor was also in his accustomed seat beside the hearth —or rather beside the stand of growing flowers and ferns that hid the hearth, with a book on his knee. He was sitting there when the first rose whizzed in out of the silence and solitude of night without warning upon him, announcing the arrival of the Boy. It startled him somewhat, but he did not wince from the shower that followed, nor did he move when the Boy chose to show himself, but merely smiled and closed his book and then sat watching the next part of the proceedings with the gravity of an eastern potentate. He sat so now, looking up at the great cathedral, seen dimly through the open window, towering above them, his profile turned to the Boy, and the roses all about him—on the floor, on the back of his chair, one on his shoulder, another on his book, and one he held in his hand. There were dozens of them of every hue, from that deep crimson damask which is almost black, to the purest white, fresh gathered from the trees apparently, with the dew still glistening on their perfumed petals and on the polished surface of the leaves. The Tenor, becoming conscious of the *Gloire de Dijon* he held in his hand, looked into its creamy depth with quiet eyes. The beauty of the flower was a pleasure to him—though, for the matter of that, everything was a pleasure to him now, He had no words to tell it, but his face was irradiated by the gladness of the hope which he cherished, from morning till night.

The Boy had been watching him admiringly. "You will be one of the beauties when you come out, dear Israfil," he said. "They will photograph you and put you into the shop windows, cabinet size two-and-sixpence. Sounds rather vul-

gar, though, doesn't it? Savours of desecration, to my mind. But, Israfil, you will certainly be the rage. One so seldom sees a good-looking man! Good-looking women are common enough and they make themselves still commoner nowadays," —which remark coming from such a quarter amused the Tenor, whereupon the Boy became irate. "Oh, jeer away!" he exclaimed; "but when you know Angelica as well as I do you will respect my knowledge of the subject."

But here the Tenor threw back his head, and groaned aloud.

"Boy, I protest!" he exclaimed. "I can endure your garrulousness, but I do bar your cynicism. If you can't be agreeable, be still. You're in a horrid bad temper"—and so saying the Tenor rose in his languid way, got a little table which he placed beside his chair, spread out his pipes upon it, and began to clean them with crows' quills, the Boy watching the operation the while with cheerful intentness.

"Pipes and tobacco and roses!" he said at last. "What a mixture it sounds! But it doesn't look bad, dear Israfil," he added encouragingly.

The Tenor made no remark; his pipes seemed to be all engrossing. He had just filled the bowl of one with a number of fuseeheads, cut off short, and now he popped in a light and corked them up. There was a tiny explosion on the instant, followed by a rush of smoke through the shank of the pipe, which swept it clean, and added musk and gunpowder to the already heavy odour of roses that filled the room.

The Boy, still lolling on the sofa observing the Tenor's proceedings with interest, drew up one leg, clasping his hands round it below the knee, and began to sing to himself in a monotonous undertone as was his wont.

"By-the-bye," the Tenor said, like one who suddenly remembers, "I found some verses after you were here the other night"—and he straightened himself to feel in his pockets— "I suppose you dropped them. Here they are." And then he leant back in his chair again and read aloud:

"When the winter storms were howling o'er the ocean,
Leafless trees and sombre landscape cold and drear,
Bitter winds, and driving rains, or white commotion
Of the whirling snow that drifted far and near;
Then my heart, which had been strong, was bowed and broken,
I was crushed with sudden sense of loss and fear,
Dull as silence passed the days and brought no token
Of a light to make the darkness disappear.

Would the grief that wrecked my life forever hold me?
Soon or later winter storms their ravage cease—
With the coming of the green leaves, something told me,
With the coming of the green leaves there is peace.

When the bursting buds proclaim'd the spring time nearing,
Song of birds and scent of flowers everywhere,
Drowsy drone of distant workers, and the cheering
Hum of honey-seeking bees in all the air;
Then my sorrow took swift wings and rose and left me;
And I knew no more the aching of despair;
Came again to me the joy that seemed bereft me,
And for hope I changed the dreary weight of care.
With the winter tempests pass'd the storms of feeling,
Soon and surely did their power to pain me cease,
And the sunshine-lighted summer rose revealing
With the coming of the green leaves there is peace."

The Tenor looked at the Boy when he had finished, shook his head mournfully, struck a match, set fire to the paper upon which the verses were written, and watched it burn with the air of a disappointed man.

"Don't make any more rhymes, Boy," he said; "don't write any more, at least, until you get out of the sickly sentimental stage. I thought I was prepared for the worst, but I really never imagined anything quite so bad as that."

The Boy, although he had listened to the lines with a fine affectation of enjoyment, was in no way discomposed by the Tenor's adverse criticism; he seemed, on the contrary, to enjoy that too, for he chuckled and hugged himself ecstatically before he replied.

"I should like to know," he said, with his uncanny grin, "how you found out those lines were mine, for I certainly never told you that I wrote them."

The Tenor's mind misgave him.

"Didn't you?" he said, looking at the ashes.

The Boy threw himself back on the sofa.

"They were Angelica's!" he said, with a shout of laughter. "And now you look as if you would like to have them back again. It will take you months to get over that!"

The Tenor was certainly disconcerted, but he merely resumed his pipe, folded his hands, and looked up at the cathedral. He had been blessed all his life with the precious gift of silence. Outside the night was very still. There was a fitful little breeze which rustled the leaves, and made the creepers tap on the window panes, but, beyond this, there was no sound,

no sign of life or movement, nothing to remind them of the "whole cityful" so close at hand.

The Tenor lay back in his chair, looking somewhat dispirited. The Boy got up and began to wander about the room; a long pause followed which was broken by the chime.

"I have been trying to say something all the evening, and now that beastly chime has gone and made it impossible," the Boy exclaimed, as soon as he could hear himself speak. "I hate it. I loathe it. It is cruel as eternal damnation. It is condemnation without appeal. It is a judgment which acknowledges none of the excuses we make for ourselves. I wish they would change it. I wish they would make it say 'Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy upon us.'"

The Tenor put down his pipe, rose slowly, and went upstairs. In a few minutes he returned in flannels.

"You want exercise, Boy," he said. "You must come out. It is a lovely night for the river, and I have been shut up in the Close all day."

The Boy sprang to his feet. "Yes, yes," he exclaimed with animation, "let us go, and I'll bring my violin. Where's my hat?"

"You came without one to-night—or perhaps you hung it on the palings."

"No, I didn't," the Boy replied. "I must have forgotten it altogether. But it doesn't matter. I'd rather be without one. I always take it off when I can."

"So I have seen," said the Tenor, following him out.

As he walked through the Close, still a little behind the Boy, he could not help noticing, by no means for the first time, but more particularly than usual, what a graceful creature the latter was. His slender figure showed to advantage in the light flannels. They made him look broader and more manly while leaving room for the free play of limb and muscle. He had knotted a crimson silk scarf round his neck, sailor fashion, and twisted a voluminous cummerbund of the same round his waist, carelessly, so that one heavily fringed end of it came loose, and now hung down to his knee, swaying with his body as he moved. The Tenor remembered that his socks were also of crimson silk, a detail which had caught his eye as the Boy lolled on the sofa. It was evident that the costume had cost him a thought, and, if somewhat theatrical, it was certainly picturesque, and entirely characteristic. In one respect the Boy's art was perfect: although he was quite conscious of his

good looks, he never had the air of being so; every movement was natural and spontaneous, like the movements of a wild creature, and as agile. He seemed to rejoice in his own strength, to delight in his own suppleness; and he walked on now with healthy elastic step, his violin held to his shoulder, his clear cut cheek leant down to it lovingly; his luxuriant light hair all tumbled and tossed, while he kept time to an imaginary tune with the bow in his right hand, now flourishing it in the air, and now drawing it across the instrument, scarcely seeming to touch the strings, yet waking low Æolean harplike murmurs, or deep thrilling tones, or bright melodious cadences; making it respond to his touch like a living creature, and glancing back over his shoulder at the Tenor as they proceeded, with a joyous face as if sure of his sympathy, but anxious to see if he had it all the same.

"I feel more amiable now," he said, between cadence and cadence. "Kindly consider that I have cancelled all my former misstatements. Cynicism can't exist in a healthy sensorium with sounds like these"—and he executed a magnificent *crescendo* passage on his violin. "When I want to play I feel that I must prepare myself. Making music is a religious rite to me, which can only be performed by one in perfect charity with all men."

They were seated in the boat by this time, the Tenor at the oars.

"Row, brothers, row!"

the Boy played—"and steer yourself," he said. "I can do nothing but accompany you."

And then he began in earnest, while the Tenor made the boat fly past river bank and towing-path, and house and wharf; past bridge and tower and town—it seemed but a flash, and they were out in the open country! flat meadows on the left, and on their right the green and swelling upland, dotted with slumbrous cattle and sheep, and shadowy with the heavy summer foliage of old trees. The Tenor stopped there, exhausted.

"There is madness in your music, Boy," he said. "It puts me beside myself."

The Boy laughed.

But in the pause that followed he shivered a little, and laid aside his instrument. It was not such a very fine night on the river as it had appeared to be in the Close. The moon

would rise later, but at present there was no sign of her, and the sky, though cloudless, was not clear, the colour being that misty opaque gray which hangs low at the horizon on summer nights when the light never wholly departs, and is accompanied by a close and sultry atmosphere, surcharged with electricity, the harbinger of storms. It was so that night. There were no stars to relieve the murky heaviness, nor was it dark; a sort of twilight reigned, as comfortless as tepid water, and there was no breeze now to rustle the leaves into life. All seemed ghostly still save for the muffled rush of the river, and the melancholy howling of a dog at some farm out of sight. And even the river was not its usual merry self, but a sullen heavy body that slipped by stealthily, making haste to the sea as if anxious to be away from the spot, without a ripple to break its level surface, and without the musical lop and gurgle and murmur with which it danced along at brighter times. In spite of the heat—or perhaps because of it—the air was full of moisture, and while the Tenor rested, a dead white mist began to appear above the low-lying meadows. It rose thinly, a mere film at first, which, coming suddenly, would have made a man brush his hand over his eyes, mistaking the haze for some defect of vision; but gathering and gaining body rapidly, and rising a certain height clear from the ground, then seeming to hover, a thick cloud poised between earth and sky, not touching either, but drawn horizontally over the fields like a pall with ragged edges through which the trees showed in blurred outline, their leaves dripping miserably with an intermittent patter of uncertain drops as the moisture collected upon them and fell, and then collected again.

The fog was stationary for a time, and did not extend beyond the meadows, but it rose at intervals, though the clearance was only momentary, and had scarcely become perceptible before reinforcements of dull white vapour, tainted with miasma, rolled up from the marshy ground, bringing dank odours of standing water and weedy vegetation, half decayed, and gradually encroaching on the river, the smooth surface of which glowed with a greasy gleam beneath it, making it look like a river of oil.

"Let us go back," said the Boy. "My soul is sick with apprehension, and the damp will ruin my violin."

"I thought it was making you feel as if something were going to happen," the Tenor observed as he got the boat round.

The Boy ruffled his flaxen hair, and laughed uneasily. "Get away quick," he said. "If the elements do sympathize with man, there'll be a tragedy here before morning."

The Tenor pulled on steadily and in silence for some distance. But once out of sight of the mist and the meadows, the Boy's ever varying spirits rose again. He took up his violin, and drew soft sounds from it which seemed to float away far out into the night.

"Sing something," he said at last, playing the prelude to the most love-sweet song ever written.

"I arise from dreams of thee," the Tenor sang like one inspired.

The Boy uttered a deep sigh when he had finished; he was speechless with pleasure.

But the Tenor went on. He sang of the sun and the sea, gliding from one strain to another, and unconsciously keeping time to the measure as he rowed, now making the little boat leap forward with a fine impulse, now almost resting on his oars till their progress through the water was scarcely perceptible, and now stopping altogether while he lingered on a closing cadence, looking up.

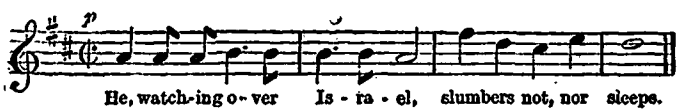
People who chanced to wake, as the windings of the river brought the singer past their homes that night, sat up in their beds and wondered. The music made them think of old tales of weird enchantment, in which strains, incomprehensibly sweet and thrilling like these, coming from nobody could tell where, had played a part. And one poor creature, who had long been dying in lingering pain, thought heaven had opened for her, and, smiling, passed happily away.

It would have been no great stretch of the imagination to have supposed that nature did sympathize with man in his moods just then, for gradually, as if to the music, the murky clouds had parted like a curtain at a given signal, and rolled away, leaving the vault of night high and bare and blue above them, with here and there a diamond star or two sparsely sprinkled from horizon to zenith, radiant at first, but presently paling before a slender shaft of light that shot up in the east, and then, opening fan-like was quickly followed by the great golden rim of the moon herself. She rose from behind a hill crested with fir trees, which appeared for a moment as if photographed on her disc, and then, mounting rapidly, hung suspended in a clear indigo sky above the quiet woods, the river and the little boat, which was motionless now—an ideal

moon in an ideal world with ideal music to greet her. But the Boy dropped the violin on his knee and forgot to play as he watched this beautiful transformation scene, and the Tenor's song sank to a murmur while he also gazed and waited, dipping his oars to keep the boat in mid-stream mechanically. Joy and sadness are near akin in music; they are like pleasure and happiness, the one is the surface of feeling, the other its depth; and there is solemnity in every phase of absolute beauty which cannot fail to influence such natures as the Tenor's and the Boy's. It was the Tenor, though, that felt this moment most. His nature, if not deeper, was more devout than the Boy's; pleasure with him was a veritable uplifting of the spirit in praise and thankfulness; and all the peace and quietness about them, the marvellous light on hill and wood and vale, and even the nearness of the unseen city, which he felt without perceiving it, and from which there came to him that sense of fellowship and of the sacredness of human life in which all the best qualities of man are rooted; these together sanctified the time. Although, for the matter of that, to such a nature all times and seasons are sanctified. For if ever a man's soul was purified on earth, his was; and if ever a man deserved to see heaven, he did. Humanly speaking there was no stain on him; in thought, word, and deed he was immaculate and true as a little child. This moment was therefore peculiarly his own, a moment of deep happiness, which found expression, as all pleasurable emotion did with him, in music. He lifted up his voice, that wonderful voice which had no equal then upon earth, and sang as he had sung once before on that very spot when the first vague idea of the omnipresent majesty of a God possessed him, sang with all his heart, and it was the litany of the Blessed Virgin, the one he had heard in France in days gone by, the one he had been singing when first he met the Boy, which recurred to him now—why or wherefore it would be hard to say. He had not thought of it since. But perhaps the moon, which was shining again as it had shone that night on the old market-place, had helped to recall it, or perhaps it satisfied him with a sense of appropriateness. For it was not a dismal, monotonous product of mercenary dryness to which the words were set, but the characteristic music of devotion by which the spirit of prayer is made audible when words fail, as they always do, to express it in all its force and fervour.

The Boy listened a while with parted lips. It was a new ex-

perience for him, and he was deeply moved. Then his musical instinct awoke, and presently he took up the strain, voice and violin, accompanying the Tenor, who rowed on once more, while the river banks resounded with, "Christe audi nos, Christe exaudi nos," and re-echoed "Miserere nobis."

At one point as they approached, a lady appeared suddenly, and stood with her hands clasped to her breast, looking and listening. She was a tall and graceful woman, wrapped in a long cloak and bareheaded, as if she had stepped out from somewhere just for the moment. She evidently recognized the singer; and the Boy would have recognized the beautiful face, strong in its calm, sad serenity, and compassionate, had he looked that way; but he did not look that way, and they swept on, the music growing fainter and fainter in the distance, till at last the boat was out of sight. Yet even then a few high notes continued to float back; but these in turn quivered into silence, and all was still—only for a moment, though, for the clocks had struck unheeded, and now the chime rang out through the sultry air, voice-like, clear, and resonant:

The lady listened, looking up as if the message were for her, but sighed.

"It will come right, I know," she said as she turned away. "But, Lord, how long?"

CHAPTER XV.

AIR perfumed with flowers; music, motion, warmth, and stillness; moonlit meadows, shadowy woods, the river, and the boat; it had been a time of delight too late begun and too soon ended. But exaltation cannot last beyond a certain time at that height, and then comes the inevitable reaction. It came upon the Tenor and the Boy quite suddenly, and for no apparent reason. It was the Boy who felt it first, and left off playing, then the song ceased, and the Tenor rowed on diligently. They were near the landing place by this time, but

the Tenor did not know it. He had not noticed the landmarks as they passed, and thought they had still some distance to go.

"Here, Boy," he said, breaking a long silence. "Take the oars and row. I am tired. And it is your turn now."

"Oh!" the Boy exclaimed derisively. "Just as if I would row and blister my lovely white hands when you are here to row me!"

"I cannot tolerate such laziness," the Tenor protested. "It is sparing the rod and spoiling the child. Here, take the oars or I'll throw you overboard," and he made a gesture toward him.

The Boy jumped up laughing, and flourishing his violin as if he would hit the Tenor on the head with it. "Don't touch me," he cried, "or I'll——"

"Take care, for God's sake!" the Tenor exclaimed.

But too late. His excitable companion, in the middle of cutting a fantastic caper, reeled, lost his balance, plunged head foremost into the water, and sank like a stone.

Without a moment's delay the Tenor dived in after him, the cockleshell of a boat, half capsizing as he went over, took in water enough to sink her to the gunwale, and the whole thing happened so quickly that a spectator on the bank who had seen the boat and its occupants one moment might have looked in vain the next for any trace of either.

The Tenor came to the surface alone. His dive in the uncertain light had been unsuccessful, and now he had the strength of mind to wait—in what agony of suspense Heaven only knows!—till the Boy should rise. It could only have been a few seconds, but it was long enough for the Tenor to lay another man's death at his own door, to realize the loss to himself the Boy would be, and his position when he would have to take the dreadful news to the family, only one member of which in all probability knew of their intimacy. She knew—But, good Heaven! would she not blame him? Oh, he had been to blame, to blame!—It was only a few seconds, yet it was time enough for the unfortunate Tenor to live over again the awful moment when he had seen his best friend drop dead, only there was a double pang, for time and space were confounded, and it was as if both father and brother—as they had been to him—had gone down at once, and both by his hand.

In that brief interval of suffering his face had become rigid

and set, a stony mask with no visible sign of emotion upon it; and yet the man's strength and power of endurance were evident in this, that he had the courage to wait.

And presently the Boy rose to the surface within easy reach. With an exclamation of relief the Tenor grasped him, and struck out for the shore—afraid at first that the Boy, who apparently could not swim, would cling about him in his fright and hamper his movements; and then afraid because the Boy did not cling about him, but suffered himself to be dragged through the water, inert, like a log, helpless, lifeless—no, not lifeless, the Tenor argued with himself. He could not be lifeless, you know. He had not been in the water long enough for that. The Tenor noticed that he had not let go of his violin, and thought: "The ruling passion strong in—no, not in death. How could a dead hand hold on like that? Boy, dear Boy!" But the Boy made no response. The Tenor had struck out for the nearest bank which, as luck would have it, brought him to the landing place at the watergate. His perception seemed singularly quickened; every sense was actively alive to what was passing; nothing escaped him; and he rendered an account to himself of all that occurred, feeling it strange the while that he should be able to do so at such a time. He noticed some detail of the stonework in the arch as he swam toward it; he noticed the poplars, some three or four of different heights, which stood up all stiff and vimineous as seen from below, beside it; he remembered the Boy once saying they looked like hairy caterpillars standing on their heads, and smiled even now at the quaint conceit. When he reached the steps and clutched the handrail, it was with a sensation of joy that nearly paralyzed him. It was curious, though, what odd and trivial phrases rose to his lips, what irrelevant thoughts passed through his mind.

"Mustn't holloa till we're out of the wood," he warned himself, as he drew the Boy from the water with difficulty, and, getting him over his shoulder so that he could hold him with one hand and steady himself on the steep steps with the other began to stagger up. "I wonder what the Boy would say if he could see me now!" was his involuntary thought as he did so.

The Boy was heavier than his slender figure would have led one to suppose, or else the Tenor was not so strong as he thought himself; at all events he swayed under his burden as he carried him through the silent Close, now putting out his

hand flat against a wall to steady himself, and now staggering up to the gnarled trunk of one of the old lime trees, and pausing to take breath while he mentally calculated the distance between that and the next support at which he could stop to rest, noticing in the brief interval the blackness of the shadows; noticing also a little shiver of leaves above him caused by a gust of air, the first forerunner of a breeze that was rapidly rising; noticed this last fact particularly, partly because the wind chilled him in his thin wet flannels, and partly because it marked the change and contrast between the warm and happy time just over, the anxious present moment, and the dread of what might be yet to come. The next support was the corner of the wall which surrounded the dean's garden; creeping on by that till it ended, he made an unsteady dash across the road for the wall of the cathedral, and then from that across again, zigzag, to his own little gate, where, gathering his strength for the last effort, he took the Boy, whom he apostrophised as a perfect Old Man of the Sea, in both arms, as a mother does her child, and a moment afterward laid him on the floor of the long low room where they had spent so many happy hours together, and from whence he had gone out a short time before all life and strength and youth and beauty: "Gone to his death!" The Tenor felt the phrase in his mind, but stifled it with a "Thank God!" as he laid him down.

He had been fatigued by the long row when the accident happened, and was now almost exhausted by excitement, terror for the Boy, and this last effort; but still his mind went on with abnormal clearness noting every trifle, and continuing to force him, as it were, to render an account of each to himself. He noticed the perfume of roses, the roses the Boy had showered in upon him—so short a time before—and he found himself measuring the shortness of the interval again as if it would have been easier to bear the catastrophe had it not jostled a happier state of things so closely. He found himself wondering what the Boy would say if he knew he had brought him in by the front door instead of by the window; he was sure he would have insisted on the mode of entrance he so much preferred had he been conscious, and felt as if he had taken a disloyal advantage of the Boy's helpless condition.

But while these trivial thoughts flashed through his brain he lost no time, not even in lighting a lamp, though the room

was dark. What there was to be done must be done promptly, and with the same extraordinary lucidity of mind he remembered every simple remedy there was at his disposal. He ran upstairs, three steps at a time, for the blankets off his own bed. He had made up the kitchen fire, as was his wont, that evening, for the Boy to cook if it pleased him, and fortunately it was burning brightly still. He warmed the blankets there, and then returning, stripped the light flannel clothing from the Boy, loosened his fingers from the violin which he still clutched convulsively, rolled him up in them, and then, with an effort, lifted him on to the sofa, where he had sat and jested only a little while ago—and again the involuntary reckoning of time, to consider the contrast between the then and now, smote the Tenor to the heart with a cruel pang.

"Boy, dear Boy!" he called to him. He was kneeling beside him, but could only see a dim outline of his face in the obscurity of the room, and perhaps it was the darkness that made him look so rigid. "Boy, dear Boy!" he cried again, but the Boy made no sign. "O God, spare him!" the stricken man implored. And then he clasped the lad in his arms and pressed his cheek to his in a burst of grief and tenderness not to be controlled. He held him so for a few seconds, and it seemed as if in that close embrace, his whole being had expressed itself in love and prayer, as if he had wrestled with death itself and conquered, for all at once he felt the Boy's limbs quiver through their clumsy wrappings, and then he heard him sigh. Oh, the relief of it! The sudden reaction made him feel sick and faint. But the precious life was not yet safe. "There's many a slip"—so his mind began in spite of an effort to control it. "Restoratives—heat, stimulants, friction. He pulled the stand of ferns and flowering plants half round from the fireplace roughly, so that the pots fell up against each other, or rolled on the floor; then he fetched the burning coals from the kitchen, and heaped them on till the grate was full. The kettle had been boiling on the hob, so he brought it in now hissing, with brandy to make a drink. But he must have more light. Where are the matches? Nowhere, of course. They never are when they're wanted. However, it didn't matter, a piece of paper would do as well, and he twisted a piece up and stooped among the scattered roses to light it at the fire, and then he lit the lamp and turned to look at the Boy. All this had been done in a moment, as it seemed, and his face was still bright with hope, and prepared to smile

encouragement. But—"God in heaven!" he cried; under his breath, as a man does who is too shocked to speak out.

Had some strange metamorphosis been brought about by that sudden immersion?

He pulled himself together with an effort, and walked to the other end of the room, where he stood with his back to the sofa, and his hands upraised to his head, trying to steady himself. Then he returned.

No, he had not been mistaken, he was not mad, he was not dreaming. It was the Boy who had plunged into the water headforemost, but this——

"God in heaven!" he ejaculated again, under his breath, and then stood gazing like one transfixed.

For this, with the handsome, strong young face upturned, the smooth white throat, the dark brown braids pinned close to the head, all wet and shining; this was not the Boy, but the Tenor's own lady, his ideal of purity, his goddess of truth, his angel of pity, as, in his foolishly fond way idealizing, he had been accustomed to consider her. It was Angelica herself! Yet so complete had been the deception to his simple, unsuspicious mind, so impossible to believe was the revelation, and so used was he to associate some idea of the Boy with everything that occurred, that now, with his first conscious mental effort, he began to blame him as if her being there were due to some unpardonable piece of his mischief.

"The little wretch," he began, "how dare he"—he stopped there, realizing the absurdity of it, realizing that there was no Boy; and no lady for the matter of that, at least none such as he had imagined. It had all been a cruel fraud from beginning to end.

It was a terrible blow, but the high-minded, self-contained dignity of the man was never more apparent than in the way he bore it. His face was unnaturally pale and set, but there was no other sign of what he suffered, and, the first shock over, he at once resumed his anxious efforts to restore—the girl—whose consciousness had scarcely yet returned, although she breathed and had moved. It was curious how the new knowledge already affected his attitude toward her. In preparing the hot drink he put half the quantity of brandy he would have used five minutes before for the Boy, and when he had to raise her head to make her swallow it, he did so reluctantly. It was only a change of idea really, the Boy was a girl, that was all; but what a difference it made, and would

have made even if there had been no question of love and marriage in the matter! At any other time the Tenor himself might have marvelled at the place apart we assign in our estimation to one of two people of like powers, passions, impulses, and purposes, simply because one of them is a woman.

The stimulant revived the girl, and presently she opened her eyes and met his as he bent over her.

"You are better now, I hope," he said coldly, moving away from her.

"I am better," she answered, and again their eyes met. But there was yet another moment of dazed semi-consciousness before she was able to attach any meaning to the change she saw in his face; and then it flashed upon her. What she had hoped, feared, expected, and prevented every time they met had come to pass. He knew at last, and she could see at once what he thought of her. She would never again meet the tolerant loving glance he had had for the Boy, nor note the tender reverence of his face when her own name was mentioned. His idol was shattered, the dream and hope of his life was over, and from all that remained of them, herself as she really was, he shrank as from the dishonoured fragment of some once loved and holy thing—a thing which is doubly painful to contemplate in its ruin because of the importunate memories that cling about it.

Realizing something of this, she uttered a smothered ejaculation, and covered her face with a gesture of intolerable shame. There was always that saving grace of womanliness about Angelica, that when there was no excuse for her conduct, she had the honesty to be ashamed of herself; in consequence of which she was one of those who never erred in the same way twice.

The Tenor turned to the fire, and then noticing her wet things scattered about he gathered them up: "I will take them and dry them," he said, and gladly made his escape. What he thought in the interval was: "I must marry her now, I suppose," and he could not help smiling ironically at this new way of putting it, nor wondering a little at the possibility of such a sudden change of feeling as that which had all at once transformed the dearest wish of his life into a distasteful, if not altogether repugnant, duty.

When the things were dry he took them to her.

"I will leave you to put them on," he said. "Will you

kindly call me when you are ready?" And then he closed the window that looked out on the road, drew down the blind, and once more left her.

No reproach could have chilled and frightened her as this stiff and formal, yet cool acceptance of the position did. She feared it meant that all was over between them in a way she had never thought possible. But still she hoped to coax him round. She dreaded the next hour, the day of reckoning, as it were, but did not try to escape it. On the contrary, she hastened her dressing in order to get it over as quickly as possible.

"Israfil!" she called to him boldly, as soon as she was ready.

The Tenor returned.

She was standing in the middle of the room when he entered, and she looked at him confidently, and just as the "Boy" would have done after a piece of mischief which he had determined to brazen out. The Boy had two moods, the defiant and the repentant; it seemed that the girl—but here the Tenor checked his thoughts. It was very hard, though, to drop either of the two individualities which had hitherto been so distinct and different, and to realize that one of them at least had never existed.

She certainly brought more courage to the interview than he did, for he, the wronged one, found as he faced her now that he had not a word to say for himself. For the moment, she was master of the situation, and she began at once as if the whole thing were a matter of course.

Catching an involuntary glance of the Tenor's, she put both hands up to her head as the Boy would have done—so the Tenor, still confused between the two, expressed it to himself; and the old familiar gesture sent another pang through his heart. The water had washed the flaxen wig away, but the thick braids of her hair were still pinned up tightly, accounting for the shape of the *remarkable head* about which the Boy had so often, and, as was now evident, so recklessly, jested.

Her hair was very wet, and she began deliberately to take it down and unplait it.

"I could not always make it—my head, you know—the same shape," she said, answering his thought; "but you never noticed the difference, although you often looked. I used to wonder how you could look so intelligently and see

so little"—and she glanced down at herself, so unmistakably a woman now that he knew. She had been like a conundrum, the answer to which you would never have guessed for yourself, but you see it at once when you hear it, and then it seems so simple. She was rather inclined to speak to the Tenor in a half pitying, patronizing way, as to a weak creature easily taken in; but he had recovered himself by this time, and something in his look and manner awed her, determined as she was, and she could not keep it up.

He moved farther from her, and then spoke in a voice made harsh by the effort it cost him to control it.

"Why have you done this thing?" he said sternly.

Her heart began to beat violently. The colour left her lips, and she sank into a chair, covered once more with shame and confusion. But, boy or girl, the charm of her peculiar personality was still the same, and it had its effect upon him even at that moment, indignant as he was, as she sat there, her long hair falling behind her, looking up at him with timid eyes and with tremulous mouth.

It was pitiful to see her so, and it softened him.

"What was your object?" he asked, relenting.

"Excitement—restlessness—if I had any," she faltered. "But I had no object. I am inventing one now because you ask me; it is an afterthought. I—I took the first step"—with a dry sob—"and then I—I just drifted on—on, you know—from one thing to another."

"But tell me all about it," he persisted, taking a seat as he spoke. "Tell me exactly how it began."

There was no help for it now. He was sitting in judgment upon her, and she felt that she must make an effort to satisfy him.

"It began—oh, let me see! how am I to tell you?" and she twisted her hands, frowning in perplexity. "I don't want to embellish the story so as to make it picturesque and myself more interesting," and she looked at the Tenor with slightly elevated eyebrows, as if pained already by her own inaccuracy. There was something irresistibly comic in this candid avowal of the force of habit, and all the more so because she was too much in earnest for once to see the humour of it herself. The Tenor saw it, however, but he made no sign.

"Well, begin," he said. "I ought to know your method sufficiently well by this time to enable me to sift the wheat from the chaff."

Angelica considered a little, and then she answered, hesitating as if she were choosing each word: "I see where the mistake has been all along. There was no latitude allowed for my individuality. I was a girl, and therefore I was not supposed to have any bent. I found a big groove ready waiting for me when I grew up, and in that I was expected to live whether it suited me or not. It did not suit me. It was deep and narrow, and gave me no room to move. You see, I loved to make music. Art! That was it. There is in my own mind an imperative monitor which urges me on always into competition with other minds. I wanted to *do* as well as to *be*, and I knew I wanted to do; but when the time came for me to begin, my friends armed themselves with the whole social system as it obtains in our state of life, and came out to oppose me. They used to lecture me and give me good advice, as if they were able to judge, and it made me rage. I had none of the domestic virtues, and yet they would insist upon domesticating me; and the funny part of it was that, side by side with my natural aspirations was an innate tendency to conform to their ideas while carrying out my own. I believe I could have satisfied *them*—my friends—if only they had not thwarted me. But that was the mistake. I had the ability to be something more than a young lady, fiddling away her time on useless trifles, but I was not allowed to apply it systematically, and ability is like steam—a great power when properly applied, a great danger otherwise. Let it escape recklessly and the chances are someone will be scalded; bottle it up and there will be an explosion. In my case both happened. The steam was allowed to escape at first instead of being applied to help me on in a definite career, and a good deal of scalding ensued; and then, to remedy that mistake, the dangerous experiment of bottling it up was tried, and only too successfully. I helped a little in the bottling myself, I suppose, and then came the explosion. This is the explosion,"—glancing round the disordered room, and then looking down at her masculine attire. "I see it all now," she proceeded in a spiritless way, looking fixedly into the fire, as if she were trying to describe something she saw there. "I had the feeling, never actually formulated in words, but quite easy to interpret now, that if I broke down conventional obstacles—broke the hampering laws of society, I should have a chance——"

"It is a common mistake," the Tenor observed, filling up the pause.

"But I did not know how," she pursued, "or where to begin, or what particular law to break—until one evening. I was sitting alone at an open window in the dark, and I was tired of doing nothing and very sorry for myself, and I wanted an object in life more than ever, and then a great longing seized me. I thought it an aspiration. I wanted to go out there and then. I wanted to be free to go and come as I would. I felt a galling sense of restraint all at once, and I determined to break the law that imposed it; and that alone was a satisfaction—the finding of one law that I could break. I didn't suppose I could learn much—there wasn't much left to learn,"—this was said bitterly, as if she attached the blame of it to somebody else—"but I should be amused, and that was something; and I should see the world as men see it, which would be from a new point of view for me, and that would be interesting. It is curious, isn't it?" she reflected, that what men call 'life' they always go out at night to see; and what they mean by 'life' is generally something disgraceful?" It was to the fire that she made this observation, and then she resumed: "It is astonishing how importunate some ideas become—one now and then of all the numbers that occur to you; how it takes possession of you, and how it insists upon being carried into effect. This one gave me no peace. I knew from the first I should do it, although I didn't want to, and I didn't intend to, if you can understand such a thing. But my dress was an obstacle. As a woman, I could not expect to be treated by men with as much respect as they show to each other. I know the value of men's cant about protecting the 'weaker' sex! Because I was a woman I knew I should be insulted, or at all events hindered, however inoffensive my conduct; and so I prepared this disguise. And I began to be amused at once. It amused me to devise it. I saw a tailor's advertisement, with instructions how to measure yourself; and I measured myself and sent to London for the clothes—these thin ones are padded to make me look square like a boy. And then, with some difficulty, I got a wig of the right colour. It fitted exactly—covered all my own hair, you know, and was so beautifully made that it was impossible for any unsuspicious person to detect it without touching it; and the light shade of it, too, accounted for the fairness of my skin, which would have looked suspiciously clear and delicate with darker hair. The great difficulty was my hands and feet; but the different shape of a boy's shoes made my feet pass; and I

crumpled my hands up and kept them out of sight as much as possible. But they are not of a degenerated smallness," she added, looking at them critically; "it is more their shape. However, when I dressed myself and put on that long ulster, I saw the disguise would pass and felt pretty safe. But isn't it surprising the difference dress makes? I should hardly have thought it possible to convert a substantial young woman into such a slender, delicate-looking boy as I make. But it just shows how important dress is."

The Tenor groaned. "Didn't you know the risk you were running?" he asked.

"Oh, yes!" she answered coolly. "I knew I was breaking a law of the land. I knew I should be taken before a police magistrate if I were caught masquerading, and that added excitement to the pleasure—the charm of danger. But then you see it was danger without danger for me, because I knew I should be mistaken for my brother. Our own parents do not know us apart when we are dressed alike."

"Oh, then there *are* two of you?" the Tenor said.

"Yes. I told you. They call us the Heavenly Twins," said Angelica.

"Yes, you told me," the Tenor repeated thoughtfully. "But then you told me so many things."

"Well, I told you nothing that was not absolutely true," Angelica answered—"from Diavolo's point of view. I assumed his manner and habits when I put these things on, imitated him in everything, tried to think his thoughts, and looked at myself from his point of view; in fact my difficulty was to remember that I was not him. I used to forget sometimes and think I was. But I confess that I never was such a gentleman as Diavolo is always under all circumstances. Poor dear Diavolo!" she added regretfully; "how he would have enjoyed those fried potatoes!"

The Tenor slightly changed his position. He only glanced at her now and then when he spoke to her, and for the rest he sat as she did, with his calm deep eyes fixed on the fire, and an expression of patient sadness upon his face that wrung her heart. Perhaps it was to stifle the pain of it that she began to talk garrulously. "Oh, I am sorry for the trick I have played you!" she exclaimed with real feeling. "I have been sorry all along since I knew your worth, and I came to-night to tell you, to confess and to apologize. When I first knew you all my *loving consciousness* was dormant, if you know what that is;

I mean the love in us for our fellow-creatures which makes it pain to ourselves to injure them. But you re-aroused that feeling, and strengthened and added to it until it had become predominant, so that, since I have known you as you are, I have hated to deceive you. This is the first uncomfortable feeling of that kind I have ever had. But for the rest I did not care. I was bored. I was always bored; and I resented the serene unconcern of my friends. Their indifference to my aspirations, and the way they took it for granted that I had everything I ought to want, and could therefore be happy if I chose, exasperated me. To be bored seems a slight thing, but a world of suffering is contained in the experience; and do you know, Israfil, I think it dangerous to leave an energetic woman without a single strong interest or object in life. Trouble is sure to come of it sooner or later—which sounds like a truism now that I have said it, and truisms are things which we habitually neglect to act upon. In my case nothing of this kind would have happened"—and again her glance round the room expressed a comprehensive view of her present situation—"if I had been allowed to support a charity hospital with my violin—or something; made to feel responsible, you know."

"But surely you must recognize the grave responsibility which attaches to all women——"

"In the abstract," Angelica interposed. "I know if things go wrong they are blamed for it; if they go right the Church takes the credit. The value attached to the influence of women is purely fictitious, as individuals usually find when they come to demand a recognition of their personal power. I should have been held to have done my duty if I had spent the rest of my life in dressing well, and saying the proper thing; no one would consider the waste of power which is involved in such an existence. You often hear it said of a girl that she should have been a boy, which being interpreted means that she has superior abilities; but because she is a woman it is not thought necessary to give her a chance of making a career for herself. I hope to live, however, to see it allowed that a woman has no more right to bury her talents than a man has; in which days the man without brains will be taught to cook and clean, while the clever woman will be doing the work of the world well which is now being so shamefully scamped. But I was going to say that I am sure all my vagaries have arisen out of the dread of having nothing better

to do from now until the day of my death—as I once said to an uncle of mine—but to get up and go to bed, after spending the interval in the elegant and useless way ladies do—a ride, a drive, a dinner, a dance, a little music—trifling all the time to no purpose, not even amusing one's self, for when amusement begins to be a business, it ceases to be a pleasure. This has not mended matters, I know," she acknowledged drearily; "but it has been a distraction, and that was something while it lasted. Monotony, however luxurious, is not less irksome because it is easy. A hardworking woman would have rest to look forward to, but I hadn't even that, although I was always wearied to death—as tired of my idleness or purposeless occupations as anybody could possibly be by work. I think if you will put yourself in my place, you will not wonder at me, nor at any woman under the circumstances who, secure of herself and her position, varies the monotony of her life with an occasional escapade as one puts sauce into soup to relieve the insipidity. Deplore it if you will, but don't wonder at it; it is the natural consequence of an unnatural state of things; and there will be more of it still, or I am much mistaken."

Again the Tenor changed his position. "I cannot, *cannot* comprehend how you could have risked your reputation in such a way," he said, shaking his head with grave concern.

"No risk to my reputation," she answered with the insolence of rank. "Everybody knows who I am, and, if I remember rightly, 'That in the captain's but a choleric word which in the soldier is rank blasphemy.' What would be an unpardonable offence if committed by another woman less highly placed than myself is merely an amusing eccentricity in me, so—for *my* benefit—conveniently snobbish is society. Since I grew up, however, I find that I am not one of those who can say flippantly, 'You can't have everything, and if people have talents they are not to be expected to have characters as well.' Great talent should be held to be a guarantee for good character; the loss of the one makes the possession of the other dangerous. But what I do maintain is that I have done nothing by which I ought in justice to be held to have jeopardised my character. I have broken no commandment, nor should I under any circumstances. It is only the idea of the thing that shocks your prejudices. You cannot bear to see me decently dressed as a boy, but you would think nothing of it if you saw me half undressed for a ball, as I often am; yet if the one can be done

with a modest mind, and you must know that it can, so can the other, I suppose."

The Tenor was sitting sideways on his chair, his elbow resting on the back, his head on his hand, his legs crossed, half turned from her and listening without looking at her; and there was something in the way she made this last remark that set a familiar chord vibrating not unpleasantly. Perhaps, after the revelation, he had expected her to turn into a totally different person; at all events he was somewhat surprised, but not disagreeably, to perceive how like the Boy she was. This was the Boy again, exactly, in a bad mood, and the Tenor sought at once, as was his wont, to distract him rather than argue him out of it. This was the force of habit, and it was also due to the fact that his mind was rapidly adapting itself to a strange position and becoming easier in the new attitude. The woman he had been idolizing was lost irretrievably, but the charm which had been the Boy's remained to him, and he had already begun to reconcile himself to the idea of a wrong-headed girl who must be helped and worked for, instead of a wrong-headed boy.

"But why should you have chosen this impossible form of amusement in particular?" he said. "Why could you not interest yourself in the people about you—do something for them?"

"I did think of that, I did try," she answered petulantly. "But it is impossible for a woman to devote herself to people for whom there is nothing to be done, who don't want her devotion; and, besides, devotion wasn't my vocation. But, after all," she broke off, defending herself, "I only arrived at this by slow degrees, and I never should have come so far at all if Diavolo had stuck to me; but he got into a state of don't-care-and-can't-be-bothered, and separated his work from mine by going to Sandhurst. Then I found myself alone, and you cannot think how a woman must suffer from the awful loneliness of a life like mine when I had no one near me in the sense in which Diavolo has always been near, a life that is full of acquaintances as a cake is full of currants, no two of which ever touch each other."

The Tenor's habitual quiescence seemed to have deserted him. He changed his position incessantly, and did so now again; it was the only sign he made of being disturbed at all; and as he moved he brushed his hand back over his hair, but did not speak.

"I kept my disguise a long time before I used it," she began again, another morsel of incident and motive recurring to her. "I don't think I had any very distinct notion of what I should do with it when I got it. The pleasure of getting it had been everything for the moment, and having succeeded in that and tried the dress, I hid it away carefully and scarcely ever thought of it—never dreamt of wearing it certainly until one night—it was quite an impulse at last. That night, you know, the first time we met—it was such a beautiful night! I was by myself and had nothing to do as usual, and it tempted me sorely. I thought I should like to see the market-place by moonlight, and then all at once I thought I *would* see it by moonlight. That was my first weighty reason for changing my dress. But having once assumed the character, I began to love it; it came naturally; and the freedom from restraint, I mean the restraint of our tight uncomfortable clothing, was delicious. I tell you I was a genuine boy. I moved like a boy, I felt like a boy; I was my own brother in very truth. Mentally and morally, I was exactly what you thought me, and there was little fear of your finding me out, although I used to like to play with the position and run the risk."

"It was marvellous," the Tenor said.

"Not at all," she answered, "not a bit more marvellous in real life than it would have been upon the stage—a mere exercise of the actor's faculty under the most favourable circumstances; and not a bit more marvellous than to create a character as an author does in a book; the process is analogous. But the same thing has been done before. George Sand, for instance; don't you remember how often she went about dressed as a man, went to the theatres and was introduced to people, and was never found out by strangers? And there was that woman who was a doctor in the army for so long—until she was quite old. James Barry, she called herself, and none of her brother officers, not even her own particular chum in the regiment she first belonged to, had any suspicion of her sex, and it was not discovered until after her death, when she had been an Inspector General of the Army Medical Department for many years. And there have been women in the ranks too, and at sea. It was really not extraordinary that an unobservant and unsuspicious creature like yourself should have been deceived."

This recalled the patronizing manner of the Boy at times, and the Tenor smiled.

"The meeting with you was an accident, of course," Angelica proceeded with her disjointed narrative; "but I thought I would turn it to account. I was, as you used to say, devoured by curiosity, and my mind is always tentative. I wanted to hear how men talk to each other. I didn't believe in goodness in a man, and I wanted to see badness from the man's point of view. I expected to find you corrupt in some particular, to see your hoofs and your horns sooner or later, and I tried to make you show them: but that of course you never did, and I soon realized my mistake. I had a standing quarrel with your sex, however, and at first it pleased me to deceive you simply because you were a man. That was only at the very first, for, as soon as I began to appreciate your worth, I felt ashamed of myself. Don't you see, Israfil, you have been raising me all along, It has been a very gradual process, though, but still I *did* wish to undeceive you. I would have done so at once if you had not been so far above me. If you had spoken to me when I gave you that chance—in the cathedral after the service, don't you remember?—it would have been stepping down from your pedestal; we should have been on the same level then, and I need not have dreaded your righteous indignation. But as it was you maintained your high position, and I was afraid—and I could not give you up. It was delightful to look at myself—an ideal self—from afar off with your eyes; it made me feel as if I could be all you thought me; it made me wish to be so; and it also made me more sorry than anything to have you think so highly of me when I did not deserve it. All these were signs of awakening which I recognized myself—and I did try over and over again to undeceive you about my character, but you never would listen to me. I wish—I wish you had!"

"Do you love me then?" the Tenor asked her, and was startled himself as soon as he had spoken by the immediate effect of the question upon her. It was evident that she had received a terrible shock. She changed colour and countenance, and swayed for a moment as if she were about to faint, and he sprang up to catch her in his arms, but she recovered herself sufficiently to check the impulse: "No, no," she exclaimed hoarsely,—"stop! stop! you don't know—My God! how could I have put myself in such a position?—I mean—let me tell you——" She shut her eyes and waited, the Tenor looking at her in pained surprise. He sank again on to the seat from which he had risen, and waited also, wondering.

Presently she opened her eyes and looked at him: "The charm—the charm," she faltered, "has all been in the delight of associating with a man intimately who did not know I was a woman. I have enjoyed the benefit of free intercourse with your masculine mind undiluted by your masculine prejudices and proclivities with regard to my sex. Had you known that I was a woman—even you—the pleasure of your companionship would have been spoilt for me, so unwholesomely is the imagination of a man affected by ideas of sex. The fault is in your training; you are all of you educated deliberately to think of women chiefly as the opposite sex. Your manner to me has been quite different from that of any other man I ever knew. Some have fawned on me, degrading me with the supposition that I exist for the benefit of man alone, and that it will gratify me above all else to know that I please him; and some few, such as yourself, have embarrassed me by putting me on a pedestal, which is, I can assure you, an exceedingly cramped and uncomfortable position. There is no room to move on a pedestal. Now, with you alone of all men, not excepting Diavolo, I almost think I have been on an equal footing; and it has been to me like the free use of his limbs to a prisoner after long confinement with chains." The expression which the Tenor's abrupt question had called into her countenance passed off as she spoke, and with it the impression it had made upon the Tenor. He mistook the remarks she had just been making for a natural girlish evasion of the subject, and he did not return to it, partly because he felt it to be an inopportune time, but also because he was pretty sure of her feeling for him, and thought that he would have ample leisure by and by, the leisure of a lifetime, to press the question. There were other explanations to be asked for too, which it seemed advisable to him to get over at once and have done with.

"But how have you managed to get out night after night," he asked, "without being missed?"

"Not night after night," she answered. "If you remember, there were often long intervals. But I have told you, I was constantly alone. The house is large, none of the servants sleep near my room, and my husband——"

"Your—*what?*" the Tenor demanded, turning round on his chair to face her, every vestige of colour gone from his countenance, yet not convinced. "What did you say?" he repeated, aghast.

"My—husband," she faltered. "Mr. Kilroy of Ilverthorpe."

Hitherto, he had uttered no reproach, but she knew that this reticence was due to self-respect rather than to any lingering remnant of deference, and now when she saw his face ablaze she was prepared for an outburst of wrath. All he said, however, was, speaking with quiet dignity: "You need not have allowed that part of the deception to go on. You should have told me that at once; why did you not?"

For the first time Angelica lost her presence of mind. "I—I forgot," she stammered.

The Tenor threw back his sunny head and laughed bitterly.

"It is a curious fact," Angelica remarked upon reflection, and as if speaking to herself, "but I really had forgotten.

The Tenor looked at the fire, and in the little pause that ensued Angelica suddenly lost her temper.

"If you are deceived in me you have deceived yourself," she burst out, "for I have tried my utmost to undeceive you. You go and fall in love with a girl you have never spoken to in your life, you endow her gratuitously with all the virtues you admire without asking if she cares to possess them; and when you find she is not the peerless perfection you require her to be, you blame her! oh! isn't that like a man? You all say the same thing: 'It wasn't me!'"

"What will your husband say?" the Tenor ejaculated in an undertone.

"Well, you see the bargain was when I asked him to marry me——"

"When you *what?*" said the Tenor.

"Asked him to marry me," Angelica calmly repeated. "The bargain was that he should let me do as I liked, there being a tacit understanding between us, of course, that I should do nothing morally wrong. I could not under any circumstances do anything morally wrong—not, I confess, because I am particularly high-minded, but because I cannot imagine where the charm and pleasure of the morally wrong comes in. The best pleasures in life are in art, not in animalism; and all the benefit of your acquaintance, I repeat, has consisted in the fact that you were unaware of my sex. I knew that directly you became aware of it another element would be introduced into our friendship which would entirely spoil it so far as I am concerned."

It is a noteworthy fact, as showing how hopelessly involved

man's moral perceptions are with his prejudices and faith in custom even when reprehensible, that the Tenor was if anything more shocked by Angelica's outspoken objection to grossness than he would have been by a declaration of passion on her part. The latter lapse is not unprecedented, and therefore might have been excused as natural; but the unusual nature of the declaration she had made put it into the category to which all things out of order are relegated to be taken exception to, irrespective of their ethical value. But he said nothing, only he turned from her once more, and gazed sorrowfully into the fire.

Angelica looked at him with a dissatisfied frown on her face. "I wish you would speak," she said to him under her breath; and then she began again herself with her accustomed volubility: "Oh, yes, I married. That was what was expected of me. Now, my brother when he grew up was asked with the most earnest solicitude what he would like to be or to do; everything was made easy for him to enter upon any career he might choose, but nobody thought of giving *me* a chance. It was taken for granted that I should be content to marry, and only to marry, and when I expressed my objection to being so limited nobody believed I was in earnest. So here I am. And I won't deny," she confessed with her habitual candour, "that it did occur to me that I might have cared for you as a lover had I not been married. But of course the thought did not disturb me. It was merely a passing glimpse of a might-have-been. When one has a husband one must be loyal to him, even in thought, whatever terms we are on."

The Tenor rose abruptly and walked to the farther end of the room, and stood there for a little leaning against the window-frame with his back to her, looking out at the cathedral. He felt sick and faint, and found the fire and the smell of the roses overpowering. But presently he recovered, and then he returned to her. His face was set now, white and passionless, as it had been while he waited to rescue her from the river, and when he spoke there was no tone in his voice; it was as if he were repeating some dry fact by rote.

"There is no excuse for you then," he said; and she perceived with surprise that until he knew she was married he had tried to believe that there was. "You were playing with me, cheating me, mocking me all the time."

Angelica looked at him in dismay. "Israfil! Israfil?" she pleaded, springing to her feet and clasping his arm with both

hands, her better nature thoroughly aroused, "O Israfil! forgive me!" She almost shook him in her vehemence, then flung him from her, and pressed her hands to her eyes for an instant. "Mocking you? Oh, no!" she protested. "Believe me—believe me if you can. I respected you almost from the first; I reverenced you at last. I used to tease you about myself to begin with, I repeat, because it did not occur to me that you could care seriously for a girl to whom you had never spoken. Then I began to perceive my mistake. Then I felt anxious to get you to go away and return, and be properly introduced to us."

"And so you schemed——"

"I arranged a future for you that is worthy of you. O Israfil, I have some conscience. I am not so bad as you think me. Even if I had not dared to tell you to-night, I should have sent you a full explanation as soon as you had gone. I thought when once you were engaged upon a new career, you would forget—all this."

"I am surprised to hear that you did not expect me to enjoy the joke at my own expense—the trick you have played me."

Angelica changed countenance; it was exactly what she had expected.

"Don't speak bitterly to me," she exclaimed. "It is not natural for you to do so. Oh! I should know—I know only too well—all your good qualities. My heart has been wrung a hundred times—by the thought—of all—I have—lost—by my folly." She raised her hands with a despairing gesture. "Don't imagine that you suffer—alone—or more than I do. There is hope for you; there is none for me. But one thing has been a comfort. I knew you only cared for an ideal creature, not at all like me. I was not afraid you would break your heart for a phantom that had never existed. And for me as I am, I knew you could have no regard. I see"—she broke off—"I see all the contradictions that are involved in what I have said and am saying, and yet I mean it all. In separate sections of my consciousness each separate clause exists at this moment, however contradictory, and there is no reconciling them; but there they are. I can't understand it myself, and I don't want you to try. All I ask you is to believe me—to forgive me."

There was an interval of silence after this, and then the Tenor spoke again.

"It is nearly morning," he said. "I will see you safely home."

The Boy had been allowed to come and go as he liked, but with her it was different; and the altered position made itself again apparent in this new-found need for an escort. It was evident, too, from the way the Tenor had allowed the subject to drop, tacitly agreeing to the assertion: "For me as I am I knew you could have no regard," that he considered there was nothing more to be said; but Angelica retained her childish habit of talking everything out, and this did not satisfy her, it was such a lame conclusion.

She got up now, however, to accompany him. "My hair!" she exclaimed, recollecting. "What am I to do with my hair? I suppose my wig is lost." Then she burst out passionately: "Oh, why did you save my life!" and wrung her hands—"or why aren't you different now you know? Can't you say something to restore my self-respect? Won't you forgive me?"

The Tenor's face contracted as with a spasm of pain. He had much to forgive, and he may be pardoned if he showed no eagerness; but he spoke at last. "I do forgive you," he said. Then all at once his great tender heart swelled with pity. "Poor misguided girl!" he faltered with a broken voice; "may God in heaven forgive you, and help you, and keep you safe, and make you good and true and pure now and always."

She sank down at that, and clasped his feet and burst into a paroxysm of tears, which were as a fervent *Amen* to the Tenor's prayer.

"Come!" he said, raising her. "Come, before it is too late. You must do something with your hair."

But she could not plait it, her hands trembled so, and he was obliged to help her. He got her a hat to roll it up under.

"The light is uncertain," he said, "and it is raining now. Even if we do meet anyone, I don't think they would notice—especially if I can find an umbrella for you."

He hunted one up from somewhere, and then he hurried her away, ferried her across the river, and left her at the lodge gate safely, his last words being:—"You will do some good in the world—you will be a good woman yet, I know—I know you will."

END OF BOOK IV.

BOOK V.

MRS. KILROY OF ILVERTHORPE.

Face to face in my chamber, my silent chamber, I saw her:
God and she and I only, there I sat down to draw her Soul through
The clefts of confession—"Speak, I am holding thee fast,
As the angel of recollection shall do it at last!"
"My cup is blood-red
With my sin," she said,
"And I pour it out to the bitter lees.
As if the angel of judgment stood over me strong at last
Or as thou wert as these,"
—*Elizabeth Barrett Browning.*

Howbeit all is not lost
The warm noon ends in frost
And worldly tongues of promise,
Like sheep-bells die from us
On the desert hills cloud-crossed:
Yet through the silence shall
Pierce the death-angel's call,
And "Come up hither," recover all.
Heart, wilt thou go?
I go!
Broken hearts triumph so."
—*Ibid.*

CHAPTER I.

HALF an hour after the Tenor parted from Angelica, she was sleeping soundly, not because she was dedolent but because she was exhausted; and when that is the case sleep is the blessed privilege of youth and strength, let what will have preceded it. She lay there in her luxurious bed, with one hand under her head, her thick dark hair—just as the Tenor had braided it—in contrast to the broad white pillow; her smooth face, on which no emotion of any kind had written a line as yet, placid as a little child's; to all appearance an ideal of innocence and beauty. And while she slept the rain stopped, the misty morning broke, the clouds had cleared away, and the sun shone forth, welcomed by a buzz of insects and chirrup of birds; the uprising of countless summer scents, and the opening of rainbow flowers. It was one of those radiant days, harmonizing best with tranquil or joyous moods, when, if we are disconsolate, nature seems to mock our misery, and callous earth rejoices forgetful of storms, making us wonder with a deeper discontent why we, too, cannot forget.

Angelica slept a heavy dreamless sleep, and when she did awake late in the morning, it was not gradually, with that pleasant dreamy languor which precedes mental activity in happy times, but with a sudden start that aroused her to full consciousness in a moment, and the recollection of all that had occurred the night before. Black circles round her eyes bore witness to the danger, fatigue, and emotion of her late experiences; she had a sharp pain in her head, too, and she was unaccustomed to physical pain; but she felt it less than the dull ache she had at her heart, and a general sense of things gone wrong that oppressed her, but which she strove with stubborn determination to stifle.

Her maid was busy in the dressing room, the door of which was open, and she called her.

"Elizabeth!"

"Yes, ma'am," and the maid appeared, smiling.

She was a good-looking woman of thirty or thereabouts. She had come to Angelica when the latter got out of her

nurse's hands, and remained with her ever since, Angelica being one of those mistresses who win the hearts of their servants by recognizing the human nature in them, and appreciating the kindness there is in devotion rather than accepting it as a necessary part of the obligation to earn wages.

"Bring me a cup of coffee, Elizabeth."

"Yes, ma'am," the maid rejoined. "It shall be ready for you as soon as you have had your bath."

"But I want it now," said Angelica, springing out of bed energetically, and holding first one slim foot and then the other out to be shod.

There was a twinkle in the maid's eye as she answered: "Please, ma'am, you made me promise never to give it to you, however much you might wish it, until you had had your bath. You said you'd be sure to ask for it, and I was to refuse, because hot coffee was bad for you just before a cold bath, and you really enjoyed it more afterward, only you hadn't the strength of mind to wait."

"Quite so," said Angelica. "You're a treasure, Elizabeth, really. But did I say you were to begin to-day?"

"No, ma'am; not to-day in particular. But the last time I brought it to you early you scolded me after you had taken it, and said if ever I let myself be persuaded again, you'd dismiss me on the spot. And you warned me that you'd be artful and get it out of me somehow if I didn't take care."

"So I did," said Angelica.

She had been brought up with a pretty smart shock the night before, and was suffering from the physical effects of the same that morning; the mental were still in abeyance. She felt a strange lassitude for one thing, and was strongly inclined to indulge it by being indolent. She breakfasted in her own room, but could not eat, neither could she read. She turned her letters over; then tried a book; then going back to her letters again, she picked one out which she had overlooked before. It was from her husband, and as she read it she changed countenance somewhat, but it would be impossible to say what the change betokened, whether pleasure or the reverse.

"Elizabeth," she said, speaking evenly as usual, "your master is coming back to-day. He will be here for lunch."

The sickening sense of loss and pain which had assailed her when she awoke that morning did not diminish as the day wore on, nor did her thoughts grow less importunate; but she steadily refused to entertain any of them, or to let her mental dis-

comfort interfere with her occupations. After reading her husband's letter she finished dressing, had a long interview with her housekeeper, went round the premises as was her daily habit, to see that all was in order, and then retired to her morning room, and set to work methodically to write orders, see to accounts, and answer letters. It was a busy day with her, and she had only just finished when Mr. Kilroy arrived. She went to meet him pleasantly, held up her cheek to be kissed, and said she was glad he was in time for lunch. There was no sign of the joy or effusion with which young wives usually receive their husbands after an absence, but the greeting was eminently friendly. Angelica had always had a strong liking for Mr. Kilroy, and, as she told him, marriage had not affected this in any way. She had made a friend of him while she was still in the schoolroom, and confided to him many things which she would not have mentioned to anyone else, not even excepting Diavolo; and she continued to do so still. She was sure of his sympathy, sure of his devotion, and she respected him as sincerely as she trusted him. In fact, had there been any outlet for her superfluous mental energy, any satisfactory purpose to which the motive power of it might have been applied, she would have made Mr. Kilroy an excellent wife. She was not in love with him, but she probably liked him all the better on that account, for she must have been disappointed in him sooner or later had she ever discovered in him those marvellous fascinations which passion projects from itself on to the personality of the most commonplace person. As it was, however, she had always left him out of her day-dreams altogether. She quite believed that pleasure is the end of life, but then her ideal of pleasure was nice in the extreme. Nothing so vulgar and violent as passion entered into it, and nothing so transient, so enervating, corroding, and damaging both to the intellectual powers and the capacity for permanent enjoyment; and nothing so repulsive either in its details, its self-centred egotistical exaltation, and the self-abasement which arrives with that final sense of satiety which she perceived to be inevitable. That part of her nature had never been roused into active life, partly because it was not naturally strong, but also because the more refined and delicately sensuous appreciation of beauty in life, which is so much a characteristic of capable women nowadays, dominated such animalism as she was equal to, and made all coarser pleasures repugnant. It had been suggested to her that she might, with

her position and wealth, form a salon and lay herself out to attract, but she said: "No, thank you. One sees in the history of French salons the effect of irresponsible power on the women who formed them. I am bad enough naturally, without applying for a licence to become worse, by making myself so agreeable that everybody will excuse me if I do. And as to being a great beauty and nothing else, one might as well be a great cow; the comfort would be the same and the anxiety less, the amount of attention received not depending on a clear complexion or an increase of figure, and therefore necessitating no limit in the enjoyment of such good things as come with the varying seasons, the winter wurzel and summer state of being in clover."

It was to Mr. Kilroy that these remarks were made one day when she wanted a target to talk at, for her appreciation of her husband did not amount to any adequate comprehension of the extent to which he understood her. The truth was, however, that he understood her better than anybody else did, the complete latitude he gave to her to do as she liked being evidence of the fact, if only she could have interpreted it; but she had failed to do so, his quiet undemonstrative manner having sufficed to deceive her superficial observation of him as effectually as the treacherous smoothness of her own placid face when in repose, upon the unruffled surface of which there was neither mark nor sign to indicate the current of changeful moods, ambitious projects, and poetical fancies, which coursed impetuously within, might excusably have imposed upon him. He was twenty years older than Angelica and looked it, but more by reason of his grave demeanour than from any actual mark of age, for his life had been well ordered and as free from care as it had been from corruption. Mr. Kilroy was not a talkative man, and what he did say was neither original nor brilliant, yet he was generally trusted, and his advice oftener asked and followed than that of people whose reputations were at least as good, and whose abilities were infinitely better, the explanation of which was probably to be found in the good feeling which he brought to the consideration of all subjects. Some people whose brains would be at fault if they were asked to judge, are enabled by qualities of heart to feel their way to the most praiseworthy conclusions. Mr. Kilroy was one of those people, well-born and of ample means, whom society recognizes as its own, but without enthusiasm, the sterling qualities which make them such an addition to its ranks being

less appreciated than the wealth and position which they contribute to its resources; still, in his case it was customary for women to describe him as "a thoroughly nice man," while "an exceedingly good fellow" was the corresponding masculine verdict.

He was in parliament now, and was consequently obliged to be in London continually, but latterly Angelica had refused to accompany him. She loved their place near Morningquest, and she had begun to appreciate the ancient city with its kindly, benighted, unchristian ways, its picturesqueness, and all that was odd and old-world about it. There, too, she was somebody, but in crowded London she lost all sense of her own identity; though, to do her justice, she disliked it less for that than for itself, for its hot rooms, society gossip, vapid men and spiteful women. Mr. Kilroy could rarely persuade her to accompany him, and never induce her to stay. Having her with him was just the one thing that he was a little persistent about, and her wilfulness in this respect had been a real trouble to him. He had come now to see if she continued obdurate, and he came meekly and with conciliation in his whole attitude. She thought, however, that she knew how to get rid of him, how to make him return alone in a week of his own accord, so far as he himself knew anything about it, and that, too, without thinking her horrid; and she laid her plans accordingly. This was something to do; and so irksome did she find the purposeless existence which the misfortune of having been born a woman compelled her to lead, that even such an object was a relief, and her spirits rose. Something—anything for an occupation; that was the state to which she was reduced. She began at once, and began by talking. All through lunch she discoursed admirably, and at first Mr. Kilroy listened fascinated, but by and by his attention became strained. He found himself forced to listen; it was an effort, and yet he could not help himself. He tried to check Angelica by assuming an absent look, but she recalled him with a sharp exclamation. He even took a letter out of his pocket and read the superscription, but put it away again shamefacedly, upon her gently apologizing for monopolizing so much of his attention.

"You see it is so long since I saw you," she said. "You must forgive me if I have too much to say."

When lunch was over the carriage came round, and Angelica, all radiant smiles, took it for granted that Mr. Kilroy would go with her for a drive. Now, if there were one thing

which he disliked more than another it was a stupid drive there and back without an object, but Angelica seemed so uncommonly glad to see him he did not like to refuse. He had many things to attend to, but he felt that it would be bad policy not to humour her mood, especially as it was such an extremely encouraging one, so he went to please her with perfect good grace, although he could not help thinking regretfully of the precious time he was losing, of the accumulation of things there were to be seen to about his own place, and of some important letters he ought to have written that afternoon. Angelica beguiled him successfully on the way out, however, so that he did not notice the distance, but on the way back her manner changed. So far she had been all brightness and animation; now she became lugubrious, and took a morbid view of things. She talked of all the men of middle age who had died lately, and of what they had died of, showing that most of them were taken off suddenly when in perfect health apparently, and usually without any premonitory symptoms of disease. It was all the result of some change of habits, she said, which was always dangerous in the case of men of middle age; and Mr. Kilroy began to feel uneasy in spite of himself, for he had been obliged to alter his own habits considerably when he married, and he was apt to be a little nervous about his health. Consequently he was much depressed when they returned, and finding that he had missed the post did not tend to raise his spirits. Angelica came down to dinner dressed in pale green, with something yellow on her head. Mr. Kilroy admired her immensely; she was the only subject upon which he ever became poetical, and somehow the combination of colours she wore on this occasion, with her lithe young figure and milk-white skin, made him think of an arum lily, and he told her so, and was very pleased with the pretty compliment when he had paid it, and with the dinner, and everything. The fatal age was forgotten, and he allowed himself to be cheered by hopes of success in his present mission. He had not yet mentioned it, but when they were left alone at dessert he began.

"Is my Châtelaine tired of seclusion, and willing to return with me to the great wicked city?" he ventured with an affectation of playfulness, which rather betrayed than concealed his very real anxiety. "A wife's place is by her husband."

"Your Châtelaine is not tired of seclusion," she answered in a cheerful matter of fact tone; "and it is a wife's duty to look

after her husband's house and keep it well for him, especially in his absence. But how much will you give me to go? My private purse is empty."

Mr. Kilroy laughed. "It always is, so far as I can make out," he said. "But a mercenary arum lily! what an anomaly! I will give you a hundred pounds to buy dolls, if you will go back with me next week."

Angelica appeared to reflect. "I will take fifty, thank you, and stay where I am," she answered with decision.

Mr. Kilroy's countenance fell. "If you will not come back with me, you shall not have any," he said, with equal firmness.

"Then I shall be obliged to make it," she rejoined, with a schoolgirl grin of delight.

This threat to make money with her violin had kept her purse full ever since her marriage—not that it was ever really empty, for she had had a handsome settlement. Mr. Kilroy, however, was not the kind of man to inspect his wife's bank-book; and besides, whether she had money or not, if it amused her to obtain more, he never could be quite sure that she would not carry out that dreadful threat and try to make it. He knew she would be only too glad of an excuse, knew, too, that if ever she tried she would be certain to succeed, what with her talent, presence, family *prestige*, and the interest which the ill-used young wife of an elderly curmudgeon (that was the character she meant to assume, she said) was sure to excite.

She did not care for money. It was the pleasure of the chase that delighted her, the fun of extorting it. If Mr. Kilroy had given her all she asked for without any trouble, she would have soon left off asking; but he felt it his duty to refuse, by way of discipline. Seeing that she was so young, he did not think it right to indulge her extravagance, and he did his best to curb the inclination gently before it became a confirmed habit.

After dinner he went to the library to write those important letters, and Angelica retired to the drawing room. The night was close, doors and windows stood wide open, and she got a violin and began to tune it. She was too good a musician not to be able to make the instrument an instrument of torture if she chose, and now she did choose. She made it screak; she made it wail; she set her own teeth on edge with the horrid discords she drew from it. It crowed like a cock twenty-five times running, with an interval of half a minute between each crow. It brayed like two asses on a common, one answering

the other from a considerable distance. And then it became ten cats quarreling *crescendo*, with a pause after every violent outburst, broken at well-judged intervals by an occasional howl.

Mr. Kilroy endured the nuisance up to that point heroically; but at last he felt compelled to send a servant to tell Angelica that he was writing.

"Oh," she observed, perversely choosing to misinterpret the purport of this tactful message, "then I need not wait for him any longer, I suppose. Bring me my coffee, please."

The man withdrew, and she proceeded with the torture. Mr. Kilroy good-naturedly shut his doors and windows, hoping to exclude the sound, when he found the hint had been lost upon her. In vain! The library was near the drawing room, and every note was audible.

Angelica was stumbling over an air now, a dismal minor thing which would have been quite bad enough had she played it properly, but as it was, being apparently too difficult for her, she made it distracting, working her way up painfully to one particular part where she always broke down, then going back and beginning all over again twenty times at least, till Mr. Kilroy got the thing on the brain and found himself forced to wait for the catastrophe each time she approached the place where she stumbled.

Presently he appeared at the drawing-room door with a pen in his hand, and a deprecating air. He suspected no malice, and only came to remonstrate mildly.

"Angelica, my dear," he began, "I am sorry to disturb you, but I really cannot write—I have been overworked lately—or I am tired with the journey down—or something. My head is a little confused, in fact, and a trifle distracts me. Would you mind——"

Angelica put down her violin with an injured air.

"Oh, I don't mind, of course," she protested in a tone which contradicted the assertion flatly. "But it is very hard." She took out her handkerchief. "You are so seldom at home; and when you *are* here you do nothing but write stupid letters, and never come near me. And this time you are horrid and cross about everything. It is such a disappointment when I have been looking forward to your return." Her voice broke. "I wish I had never asked you to marry me. You ought not to have done so—it was not right of you, if you only meant to neglect me and make me miserable. You won't do anything for me now—not even give yourself the trouble to write

out a cheque for fifty pounds, though it would not take you a minute." Two great tears overflowed as she spoke, and she raised her handkerchief with ostentatious slowness to dry them.

Mr. Kilroy was much distressed. "My *dear* child!" he exclaimed, sitting down beside her. "There, there, Angelica, now don't, please"—for Angelica was shivering and crying in earnest, a natural consequence of her immersion on the previous night, and the state of mind which had ensued. "I am obliged to write these letters. I am indeed. I ought to have done them this afternoon, but I went out with you, you know. You really are unjust to me. I have often told you that I do not think it is right for you to be so much alone, but you will not listen to me. Come and sit with me now in the library. I would much rather have you with me. I would have asked you before, but I was afraid it might bore you. Come now, do!"

"No, I should only fidget and disturb you," she answered, but in a mollified tone.

"Well, then," he replied, "I will go and finish as fast as I can, and come back to you here. And don't fret, my dear child. You know there is nothing in reason I would not do for you." In proof of which he sent the butler a little later, by way of breaking the length of his absence agreeably, with what looked like a letter on a silver salver. Angelica opened it, and found a cheque for a hundred pounds. When she was alone again, she beamed round upon the silent company of chairs and tables, much pleased. Then her conscience smote her. "He is really very good," she said to herself—"far too good for me. I don't think I ever could have married anybody else." But there was something dubious, that resembled a question, in this last phrase.

The next day was hopelessly miserable out of doors—raining, gusty, cold. Mr. Kilroy was not sorry. He had a good deal of business connected with his property to attend to, and did not want to go out. And Angelica was not sorry. She had some little plans of her own to carry out, which a wet day rather favoured than otherwise.

Having finished her accustomed morning's work, and being obliged to stay in, it was natural that she should try to amuse herself, also natural that she should try something in the way of exercise. So she collected some dozen curs she kept about the place, demonstrative mongrels for the most part, but all intelligent; and brought them into the hall, where she made them run races for biscuits, the *modus operandi* being to place

a biscuit on the top step of a broad flight of stairs there was at one end of the hall, then to collect the dogs at the other, make them stand in a row—a difficult task to begin with, but easy enough when they understood, which was very soon, although not without much shrieking of orders from Angelica, and responsive barking on their part—and then start them with a whip. The first to arrive at the top of the stairs took the biscuit as a matter of course, and the others fought him for it. It was indescribably funny to see the whole pack tear up all eagerness, and then come down again, helter-skelter, tumbling over each other in the excitement of the scrimmage, some of them losing their tempers, but all of them enjoying the game; returning of their own accord to the starting point, waiting with yelps of excitement and eyes brightly intent, ears pricked, jaws open, tongues hanging, tails wagging, sides panting, till another biscuit was placed, then off once more—sometimes after a false start or two, caused by the impetuosity of a little yapping terrier, which *would* rush before the signal was given, and had to be brought back with the whip, the other dogs looking disgusted meanwhile, like honourable gentlemen at a cad who won't play fair. Angelica, shouting and laughing, made as much noise in her way as the dogs did in theirs, and the din was deafening; an exasperating kind of din too, not incessant, but intermittent, now swelling to a climax, now lulling, until there seemed some hope that it would cease altogether, then bursting out again, whip cracking, dogs howling and barking, feet scampering, Angelica shrieking worse than ever.

Presently, Mr. Kilroy appeared, with remonstrance written on every line of his countenance.

"My dear Angelica," he said, unable to conceal his quite justifiable annoyance. "I can do nothing if this racket continues. And"—deprecatingly—"is it—is it quite seemly for you——?"

"I used to do it at home," Angelica answered.

"But you are not at home now"—quick as light she turned and looked at him with her great grieved eyes. "I mean"—he grew confused in his haste to correct himself—"of course you are at home—very much so indeed, you know. But what I want to say is—as the mistress of a large establishment—dignity—setting an example, and all that sort of thing, don't you see?"

"None of the servants are about at this hour," Angelica

answered. "It is their dinner time. But I apologize for my thoughtlessness if I have disturbed you." She smiled up at him as she spoke, and poor Mr. Kilroy retired to the library quite disarmed by her gentleness, and blaming himself for a selfish brute to have interfered with her innocent amusement. In future, he determined, he would make more allowance for her youth.

Angelica, meanwhile, had collected her dogs and disappeared. But presently she returned, and followed Mr. Kilroy to the library. He was busy writing, and she went and stood in the window, looking idly out at the rain, and drumming—absently, as it seemed—on the panes with ten strong fingers, till he could bear it no longer.

"My dear child!" he exclaimed at last, "can't you get something to do?"

Angelica stopped instantly. If her thoughtlessness was exasperating, her docility was exemplary. But she seemed disheartened; then she seemed to consider; then she brightened a little; then she got some letters, sat down, and began to write—scratch, scratch, scratch, squeak, squeak, squeak, on rough paper with a quill pen, writing in furious haste at a table just behind her husband. Why did she choose the library, his own private *sanctum*, for the purpose, when there were half a dozen other rooms at least where she might have been quite as comfortable? Mr. Kilroy fidgeted uneasily, but he bore this new infliction silently, though with an ever-increasing sense of irritation, for some time. Finally, however, an exclamation of impatience slipped from him unawares.

"Do I worry you with my scribbling?" Angelica demanded with hypocritical concern. "I'm sorry. But I've just done," —and she went away with some half dozen notes for the post.

When they met again at lunch she told him triumphantly that she had refused all the invitations which had come for him since his arrival, on account of his health. She had told everybody that he had come home for perfect rest and quiet, which he much needed after the strain of his parliamentary duties; and as one of the notes at least would be read at a public meeting to explain his absence therefrom, and would afterward appear in the papers probably, she had made it impossible for him to go anywhere during his stay. Mr. Kilroy could not complain, however, for had he not himself said only last night that he was suffering from the effects of overwork, and so alarmed her? and he would not have complained in any

case when he saw her so joyfully triumphant in the belief that she had cleverly eased him from an oppressing number of duties; but he determined to pick his excuses more carefully another time, for the prospect of a prolonged *tête-à-tête* with Angelica in her present humour somewhat appalled his peace-loving soul, and the thought of it did just stir him sufficiently for the moment to cause him to venture to suggest that in future it might be as well for her to consult him before she answered for him in any matter. Angelica replied with an intelligent nod and smile. She was altogether charming in these days in spite of her perverseness, and Mr. Kilroy, while groaning inwardly at her irritating tricks, was also touched and flattered by the anxiety she displayed for his comfort and welfare.

He hoped to enjoy a quiet cigar and a book after luncheon, but Angelica had another notion in her head. She went to the drawing room, opened doors and windows, sat down to the piano, and began to sing—shakes, scales, intervals, the whole exercise book through apparently from beginning to end, and with such good will that her voice resounded throughout the house. She had eaten nothing since breakfast so as to be able to produce it with the desired effect, and there was no escape from the sound. But poor Mr. Kilroy did not like to interfere with her industry as he had done with her idleness. He was afraid he had shown too much impatience already for one day, so he endured this further trial without exhibiting a sign of suffering; but after an hour or two of it, he found himself sighing for the undisturbed repose of his house in town, in a way that would have satisfied Angelica had she known it. At dinner she looked very nice, but she did not talk much. Conversation was not Mr. Kilroy's strong point, but he was good at anecdotes, and now he racked his brains for something new to tell her. She listened, however, without seeming to see the point of some, and others caused her to stare at him in wide-eyed astonishment as if shocked, which made him pause awkwardly to consider, half fearing to find some impropriety which his coarser masculine mind had hitherto failed to detect.

This caused the flow of reminiscences to languish, and presently to cease. Then Angelica began to make bread pills. She set them in a row, and flipped them off the table one by one deliberately when the servants left the room. This amusement ended, she pulled flowers to pieces between the courses, and hummed a little tune. Mr. Kilroy fidgeted. He

felt as if he had been saying "Don't!" ever since he came home, and he would not now repeat it, but the self-repression disagreed with him, and so did his dinner, dyspepsia having waited on appetite in lieu of digestion.

After dinner Angelica induced him to go with her to the drawing room, and when she had got him comfortably seated, and had given him his coffee and a paper, and just peace enough to let him fall into a pleasurably drowsy state, accompanied by a strong disinclination to move, she began to pick out the "Dead March" in "Saul" and kindred melodies with one finger on the piano. Mr. Kilroy bore this infliction also; but when she brought a cookery book and insisted on reading the recipes aloud, he went to bed in self-defence.

CHAPTER II.

IF the first and second days at home were failures so far as Mr. Kilroy's comfort was concerned, the third was as bad, if not worse. It was a continual case of "Please don't!" from morning till night, and Angelica herself was touched at last by the kindly nature which could repeat the remonstrance so often and so patiently; but all the same she did not forbear. All that day, however, Mr. Kilroy made every allowance for her. Angelica was thoughtless, very thoughtless; but it was only natural that she should be so, considering her youth. On the next day, however, it did occur to him that she was far too exacting, for she would not let him leave her for a moment if she could help it; and on the next he was sufficiently depressed to acknowledge that Angelica was trying; and if he did not actually sigh for solitude, he felt, at all events, that it would cost him no effort to resign himself to it if she should again prove refractory and refuse to go back with him—and Angelica knew that he had arrived at this state just as well as if he had told her; but still she was far from content. She wanted him to go, and she wanted him to stay—she did not know what she wanted. She teased him with as much zeal as at first, but the amusement had ceased to distract her in the least degree. It had become quite a business now, and she only kept it up because she could think of nothing else to do. She was conscious of some change in herself, conscious of a racking spirit of discontent which tormented her, and of the fact that, in spite of her superabundant vitality, she had lost all zest for

anything. Outwardly, and also as a matter of habit, when she was with anybody who might have noticed a change, she maintained the dignity of demeanour which she had begun to cultivate in society upon her marriage; but inwardly she raged—raged at herself, at everybody, at everything; and this mood again was varied by two others, one of unnatural quiescence, the other of feverish restlessness. In the one she would sit for hours at a time, doing nothing, not even pretending to occupy herself; in the other, she would wander aimlessly up and down, would walk about the room, and look at the pictures without seeing them, or go upstairs for nothing and come down again without perceiving the folly of it all. And she was forever thinking. Diavolo was at Sandhurst—if only he had been at Ilverthorpe! She might have talked to him. She tried the effect of a letter full of allusions which should have aroused his curiosity if not his sympathetic interest, but he made no remark about these in his reply, and only wrote about himself and his pranks, which seemed intolerably childish and stupid to Angelica in her present mood; and about his objection to early rising and regular hours, all of which she knew, so that the repetition only irritated her. She considered Mr. Kilroy obtuse, and thought bitterly that anyone with a scrap of intelligent interest in her must have noticed that she had something on her mind, and won her confidence.

This reflection occurred to her in the drawing room one night after dinner, and immediately afterward she caught him looking at her with a grave intensity which should have puzzled her if it did not strike her as significant of some deeper feeling than that to which the carnal admiration for her person which she expected and despised, would have given rise; but she was too self-absorbed to be more observant than she gave him the credit of being.

The result of Mr. Kilroy's observation was an effort to take her out of herself. He began by asking her to play to him. Not very graciously, she got out a violin, remarking that she was sorry it was not her best one.

"Where is your best one?" he asked.

"It is not at home," she answered. "I left it with Israfil, my fair-haired friend, you know." She spoke slowly, holding the end of the violin, and tightening the strings as she did so, the effort causing her to compress her lips so that the words were uttered disjointedly; and as she finished speaking, she raised the instrument to her shoulder and her eyes to Mr. Kil-

roy's face, into which she gazed intently as she drew her bow across the strings, testing them as to whether they were in tune or not, and seeming rather to listen than to look, as she did so. Mr. Kilroy, still quietly observing her, noticed that her equanimity had been suddenly restored; but whether it was the mellow tones of her violin or some happy thought that had released the tension he could not tell. It was as much relief, however, to him to see her brighten, as it was to her to feel when she answered him that a great weight had been lifted from her mind, and she would now be able "to talk it out," this trouble that oppressed her, unrestrainedly, as was natural to her.

When Mr. Kilroy accepted the terms upon which she proposed to marry him, namely, that he should let her do as she liked, she had voluntarily promised to tell him everything she did, and she had kept her word as was her wont, telling him the exact truth as on this occasion, but mixing it up with so many romances that he never knew which was which. He was in town when she first met the Tenor, but when he returned, she told him all that had happened, and continued the story from time to time as the various episodes occurred, making it extremely interesting, and also almost picturesque. Mr. Kilroy knew the Tenor by reputation, of course, and was much entertained by what he believed to be the romance which Angelica was weaving about his interesting personality. He suggested that she should write it just as she told it. "I have not seen anything like it anywhere," he said; "nothing half so lifelike."

"Oh, but then, you see, this is all *true*," she gravely insisted.

"Oh, of course," he answered, smiling. And now when she answered that she had left her best violin with the Tenor, it reminded him: "By the by, yes," he said. "How does the story progress? I was thinking about it in the train on my way home, but I forgot to ask you—other things have put it out of my head since I arrived."

"And out of mine, too," said Angelica thoughtfully—"at least I forgot to tell you—which is extraordinary, by the way, for matters are now so complicated between us that I can think of nothing else. It will be quite a relief to discuss the subject with you."

She drew up a little chair and sat down opposite to him, with her violin across her knee, and began immediately, and with great earnestness, looking up at him as she spoke. She described all that had happened on that last sad occasion

minutely—the row down the river, the moonrise, the music, the accident, the rescue, the discovery, and its effect upon the Tenor; and all with her accustomed picturesqueness, speaking in the first person singular, and with such force and fluency that Mr. Kilroy was completely carried away, and declared, as on previous occasions, that she set the whole thing before him so vividly he found it impossible not to believe every word of it.

"And what are you going to do now?" he asked with his indulgent smile, when she had told him all that there was to tell at present. "You cannot end it there, you know, it would be such a lame conclusion."

"That was just what I thought," she answered, "and I wanted to ask you. As a man of the world, what would you advise me to do?"

"Well," he began—then he rose and held out his hand to help her up from her little chair. "Will you come out and sit on the terrace," he said, "and allow me to smoke? The night is warm."

Anelica nodded, and preceded him through one of the open windows.

"Well," Mr. Kilroy resumed, when he had lit his cigar, and settled himself in a cane chair comfortably, with Angelica in another opposite. "What a lovely night it is after the rain yesterday"—this by way of parenthesis. "Rather close, though," he observed, and then he returned to the subject. "I suppose you mean that you do not want it to be all over between you?"

"*Between the Tenor and the Boy*," she corrected. "The whole charm of the acquaintance, don't you see, for me, consisted in that footing—I don't know how to express it, but perhaps you can grasp what I mean."

Mr. Kilroy reflected. "I am afraid," he said at last, "that footing cannot be resumed. The influences of sex, once the difference is recognized, are involuntary. But, if he has no objection, I do not see why you should not be friends, and intimate friends too; and with that sort of man you might make some advance, especially as you are entirely in the wrong. I am not saying, you know, that this would be the proper thing to do as a rule; but here are exceptional circumstances, and here is an exceptional man."

"Now, that is significant," said Angelica, jeering. "Society is so demoralized that if a man is caught conducting himself with decency and honour on all occasions when a woman

is in question, you involuntarily exclaim that he is an exceptional man!"

Mr. Kilroy smoked on in silence for some time with his eyes fixed on the quiet stars. His attitude expressed nothing but extreme quiescence, yet Angelica felt reproved.

"Don't snub me, Daddy," she exclaimed at last. "I came to you in my difficulty, and you do not seem to care."

Mr. Kilroy looked at his cigar, and flicked the ash from the end of it.

"Tell me how to get out of this horrid dilemma," Angelica pursued. "I shall never know a moment's peace until we have resumed our acquaintance on a different footing, and I have been able to make him some reparation."

"Ah—reparation?" said Mr. Kilroy dubiously.

"Do you think it is impossible?" Angelica demanded.

"Not impossible, perhaps, but very difficult," he answered. "Really, Angelica," he broke off laughingly, "I quite forget every now and again that we are romancing. You must write this story for me."

"We are *not* romancing," she said impatiently, "and I couldn't write it, it is too painful. Besides, we don't seem to get any further."

"Let me see where we were?" Mr. Kilroy replied, humouring her good-naturedly. "It is a pity you cannot unmarry yourself. You see, being married complicates matters to a much greater extent than if you had been single. A girl might, under certain circumstances, be forgiven for an escapade of the kind, but when a married woman does such a thing it is very different. Still, if you can get well out of it, of course the difficulty will make the *dénouement* all the more interesting."

"But I don't see how I am to get well out of it—unless you will go to him yourself, and tell him you know the whole story, and do whatever your tact and goodness suggest to set the matter right." She bent forward with her arms folded on her lap, looking up at him eagerly as she spoke, and beating a "devil's tattoo," with her slender feet, on the ground impatiently the while.

"No," he answered deliberately, "that would not be natural. You see, either you must be objectionable or your husband must; and upon the whole I think you had better sacrifice the husband, otherwise you lose your readers' sympathy."

"Make *you* objectionable, Daddy!" Angelica exclaimed. "The thing is not to be done! I could never have asked you

to marry me if you had been objectionable. And I don't see why I should be so either—entirely, you know. If I had been quite horrid, I should not have appreciated you, and the Tenor and Uncle Dawne and Dr. Galbraith—oh, dear! Why is it, when good men are so scarce, that I should know so many, and yet be tormented with the further knowledge that you are all exceptional, and crime and misery continue because it is so? What is the use of knowing when one can do nothing?"

Again Mr. Kilroy looked up at the quiet stars; but Angelica gave him no time to reflect.

"I don't see why I should be severely consistent," she said. "Let me be a mixture—not a foul mixture, but one of those which eventually result in something agreeable, after going through a period of fermentation, during which they throw up an unpleasant scum that has to be removed."

"That would do," Mr. Kilroy responded gravely.

"But just now," Angelica resumed, "it seems as if I should be obliged to let matters take their course and do nothing, which is intolerable."

"Oh, but you must do something," Mr. Kilroy decided; "and the first thing will be to go to him."

"Go to him!" she ejaculated.

"Well, yes," he rejoined. "Naturally you will feel it. Now that you are no longer *The Boy* made courageous by his unsuspicious confidence—I mean the Tenor's—it is quite proper for you to be shy and ashamed of yourself. As a woman, of course, you are not wanting in modesty. But there is no help for it; he would never come to you, so you must go to him. I quite think that you owe him any reparation you can make. And, knowing the sort of man he is—you have made his character well known in the place, have you not?"

Angelica nodded. "Well, then, a visit from a lady of your rank will create no scandal, nor even cause any surprise, I should think, if you go quite openly; for you are known to be a musician, and might therefore reasonably be supposed to have business with one of the profession. I wish, by-the-bye, you had made him an ugly man, with kind eyes, you know; it would have been more original, I think. But you will find out who he is, of course?"

"No. I hardly think so!" Angelica answered. "But you would advise me to go to him?"—this by way of bringing him back to the subject.

"Yes"—with a vigorous attempt to draw his cigar to life again, it having gone all but out—"I should advise you to go to him boldly, by day, of course; and just make him forgive you. Insist on it; you will find he cannot resist you. Then you will start afresh on a new footing as you wish, and the whole thing will end happily."

"You forget though, he did forgive me."

"There are various kinds of forgiveness," Mr. Kilroy replied. "There is the forgiveness that washes its hands of the culprit and refuses to be further troubled on his behalf—the least estimable form of forgiveness; and there is that which proves itself sincere by the effort which is afterward made to help the penitent, that is the kind of forgiveness you should try to secure."

"But somehow it still seems unfinished," Angelica grumbled.

"If you had been single now," Mr. Kilroy suggested, "you would, in the natural course of events, have married the Tenor."

"Oh, no!" Angelica vigorously interposed. "I should never have wanted to marry him. Can't I make you understand? The side of my nature which I turned to him as *The Boy* is the only one he has touched, and I could never care for him in any other relation."

"Well, I don't know," Mr. Kilroy observed thoughtfully. "It may be so, of course, but it is unusual."

"And so am I unusual," Angelica answered quickly; "but there will be plenty more like me by and by. Now don't look 'Heaven forbid!' at me in that way."

"That was not in the least what I intended to express," he answered with his kindly smile-indulgent. "And I am inclined to think that your own idea of loving him without being in love with him is the best; it is so much less commonplace. But what do you think"—speaking as if struck by a bright idea—"what do you think of putting him under a great obligation which will bind him to you in gratitude, and secure his friendship? You might, with great courage and devotion, and all that sort of thing, you know, find out all about him, prove him to be a prince or something—the heir to great estates and hereditary privileges, with congenial duties attached. The idea is not exactly new, but your treatment of it would be sure to be original——"

Angelica interrupted him by a decisive shake of her head. "But about going to him?" she demanded—"you do not

think, speaking as a man of the world yourself, and remembering that he knows the world too although he *is* such a saint; you do not think such a proceeding on my part will lower me still further in his estimation?"

"Well, no," Mr. Kilroy replied. "I feel quite sure it will have just the opposite effect. As a man of the world he will know what it has cost a young lady like you to humble herself to that extent: as a saint he will appreciate the act, looking at it in the light of a penance, which, in point of fact, it would be; and as a human being he will be touched by your confidence in him, and the value you set upon his esteem. So that, altogether, I am convinced it is the proper thing to do."

Angelica made no reply, but got up languidly after a moment's thought, carefully ruffled his hair with both hands as she passed, called him "Dear old Daddy!" and retired.

Mr. Kilroy did not like to have his hair ruffled in that way, particularly as he was apt to forget, and appear in public with it all standing up on end; but he bore the infliction as it was intended for a caress. Angelica's caresses always took some such form; she assured him he would like them in time, and he sincerely hoped he might, but the time had not yet arrived.

The following evening they were again in the drawing-room together. Mr. Kilroy was reading the papers, Angelica was sitting with her hands before her doing nothing—not even listening, though she affected to do so, when he read aloud such news as he thought would interest her. The week was nearly over, and nothing more had been said about her return to town. She was just wondering now if Mr. Kilroy had found the week a long one. She had given him more than enough of her company and made him feel—at least so she hoped, slipping back to the mood in which he had found her upon his arrival—made him feel how pleasant a thing it is to dwell alone in your own house with no one to trouble you; and she quite expected to find, when it came to the point, that he would cheerfully take no for an answer.

Presently she rose, went to a mirror that was let into the wall, and looked at herself critically for some seconds.

"Should you think it possible for anybody to fall so hopelessly in love with my appearance that, when love was found to be out of the question, friendship would also be impossible?" she demanded in a tone of contempt for herself, turning half round from the mirror to look at Mr. Kilroy as she spoke.

Mr. Kilroy glanced at her over his *pince-nez*. That same

appearance which she disliked to be valued for was a never-failing source of pleasure to him, but he took good care to conceal the fact. On this occasion, however, he fell into the natural mistake of supposing that she was coquettishly trying to extricate a compliment from him for once, an amusing feminine device to which she seldom condescended.

"Well, I should think it extremely probable," he replied—"if he were not already in love with another woman."

"Or an idea?" Angelica suggested with a yawn; and Mr. Kilroy, perceiving that he had somehow missed the point, took up his paper, and finished the paragraph he had been reading. Then he said, looking up at her again with admiring eyes: "I do not think I quite like that red frock of yours. It seems to me that it is making you look alarmingly pale."

Angelica returned to the mirror, and once more looked at herself deliberately. "Perhaps it does," she answered; "but at any rate you shall not see it again." And having spoken she sauntered out on to the terrace with a listless step, and from thence she wandered off into the gardens, where the scent of roses set her thinking, thinking, thinking. She sought to change the direction of her thoughts, but vainly; they would go on in spite of her, and they were always busy with the same subject, always working at the one idea. Israfil! Israfil! There was nobody like him, and how badly she had treated him, and how good he had always been to her, and how could she go on day after day like this with no hope of ever seeing him again in the old delightful intimate way? and oh! if she had not done this! and oh! if she had not done that! It might all have been so different if only *she* had been different; but now how could it come right? A hopeless, hopeless, hopeless case. She had lost his respect forever. And not to be respected! A woman and not respected!

She went down to the lodge gate where they had parted, and remembered the chill misery of the moment, the gray morning light, the pelting rain. Ah—with a sudden pang—she only thought of it now. How wet he must have been! He had lent her his one umbrella, and she had kept it; she had it still; she had allowed him to walk back in the rain without wrap or protection of any kind.

And now she came to think of it, he had never changed his things after he had rescued her. He never did think of himself—the most selfless man alive; and she, alas! had never thought of him—never considered his comfort in anything.

Oh, remorse! If only she could have those times all over again, or even one of those times so recklessly misspent! He might have lost his life through that wetting. Or what if he lost his voice? Singers have notoriously delicate throats. But happily nothing so untoward had resulted; she was saved the blame of a crowning disaster—she knew, because she had heard of him going to the cathedral as usual; she had taken the trouble to inquire, not daring to go herself, and she had seen in that day's paper that he would sing the anthem to-morrow, so evidently he had not suffered, which was some comfort—and yet—how could he go to the cathedral every day and sing as usual, just as if nothing had happened? It might be fortitude, but, considering the circumstances, it was far more likely to be indifference. And so she continued to torment herself; thinking, always thinking, without any power to stop.

The next day Mr. Kilroy returned to town alone. He had only once again alluded to his wish that she should accompany him, and that he did quite casually, for she had succeeded in making him content that she should refuse. She had convinced him that her exuberant spirits were altogether too much for him. He had not had an hour's peace since his arrival, though the place would have held a regiment comfortably; and what would it be if he shut her up in London, in a confined space comparatively speaking, and against her will too? He left by an early afternoon train, and she drove to the station with him to see him off. She had enjoyed his visit very much—so she said—especially the last part of it, when she had surpassed herself in ingenious devices to exact attention. All that, while it lasted, really had distracted her; but the occupation was not happiness—far from it! It was a sort of intoxicant rather, which made her oblivious for the moment of her discontent. At every pause, however, remorse possessed her, remorse for the past; yet it never occurred to her that her present misdemeanours would be past in time, and might also entail consequences which would in turn come to be causes of regret.

But, now, when she had succeeded in getting rid of Mr. Kilroy, she was sorry. She stood on the platform watching the train until it was out of sight, and then she returned to her carriage with a distinct feeling of loss and pain. What should she do with the rest of the day? She even thought of the next, and the next, and the next; a long vista of weary days, through which she must live alone and to no purpose, a waste

of life, a waste of life—a barren waste, a land of sand and thorns. She wished she was a child again playing pranks with Diavolo; and she also wished that she had never played pranks, since it was so hard to break herself of the habit; yet she enjoyed them still, and assured herself that she was only discontented now because she had absolutely nobody left to torment. Then she tried to imagine what it would be to have Diavolo with her in her present mood, and instantly a squall of conflicting emotions burst in her breast, angry emotions for the most part, because he was no longer with her in either sense of the word, because he was indifferent to all that concerned her inmost soul, and was content to live like a lady himself, a trivial idle life, the chief business of which was pleasure, unremunerative pleasure, upon which he would have had her expend her highest faculties in return for what? Admiring glances at herself—and her gowns *perhaps!*

"But what should she do with the rest of the day?" Her handsome horses were prancing through Morningquest as she asked herself the question; and there was a little milliner on the footway looking up with kindly envy at the lady no older than herself, sitting alone in her splendid carriage with her coachman and footman and *everything*—nothing to do included, very much included, being, in fact, the principal item.

"I should be helping her," thought Angelica. "She is ill-fed, overworked, and weakly, while I am pampered and strong; but there is no rational way for me to do it. If I took her home with me and kept her in luxurious idleness for the rest of her days, as I could very well afford to do, I should only have dragged her down from the dignity of her own honest exertions into the slough of self-indulgence in which I find myself, and made bad worse. *She* should have more and *I* should have less; but how to arrive at that? Isolated efforts seem to be abortive—yet——", she stopped the carriage, and looked back. The girl had disappeared. She desired the coachman to return, and kept him driving up and down some time in the hope of finding her, but the girl was nowhere to be seen, nor could they trace her upon inquiry. "Another opportunity lost," thought Angelica. "A few pounds in her pocket would have been a few weeks' rest for her, a few good meals, a few innocent pleasures—she would have been strengthened and refreshed; and I should have been the better too for the recollection of a good deed done."

The carriage had pulled up close to the curb, and the footman stood at the door waiting for orders.

"What is there to do?" thought Angelica. "Where shall I go? Not home. The house is empty. Calls? I might as well waste time in that way as any other." She gave the order, and passed the next two hours in making calls.

Toward the end of the afternoon, she found herself within about a mile of Hamilton House, and determined to go and see her mother. There was no real confidence between them, but Lady Adeline's presence was soothing, and Angelica thought she would just like to go and sit in the same room with her, have tea there, and not be worried to talk. These peaceful intentions were frustrated, however, by the presence of some visitors who were there when she arrived, and of others who came pouring in afterward in such numbers, that it seemed as if the whole neighbourhood meant to call that afternoon. Mr. Hamilton-Wells was making tea, and talking as usual with extreme precision. Angelica found him seated at a small but solid black ebony table, with a massive silver tea-service before him. He folded his hands when she entered, and, without rising, awaited the erratic kiss which it was her habit to deposit somewhere about his head when she met him; which ceremony concluded, he gravely poured her out a cup of tea, with sugar *and* milk, but *no* cream, as he observed; and then he peeped into the teapot, and proceeded to fill it up from the great urn which was bubbling and boiling in front of him. He always made tea in his own house; it was a fad of his, and the more people he had to make it for the better pleased he was. A servant was stationed at his elbow, whose duty it was to place the cups as his master filled them on a silver salver held by another servant, who took them to offer to the visitors who were seated about the room. Angelica knew the ceremony well, and slipped away into a corner, as soon as she could escape from her father's punctilious inquiries about her own health and her husband's; and there she became wedged by degrees, as the room grew gradually crowded. Beside her was a mirror, in which she could see all who arrived and all that happened, and involuntarily she became a silent spectator, the medium of the mirror imparting a curious unreality to the scene, which invested it with all the charm of a dream; and, as in a dream, she looked and listened, while clearly, beneath the main current of conversation, and unbroken by the restless change and motion of the people, her

own thoughts flowed on consciously and continuously. Half turned from the rest of the room, she sat at a table, listlessly turning the leaves of an album, at which she glanced when she was not looking into the mirror.

She saw the party from Morne enter the room—Aunt Fulda and her eternal calm! She looked just the same in the market-place at Morningquest, that unlucky night when the Tenor met the Boy. She was always the same. Is it human to be always the same?

"Who is that lady?" Angelica heard a girl ask of a benevolent looking elderly clergyman who was standing with his back to her. "Oh, that is Lady Fulda Guthrie, the youngest daughter of the Duke of Morningquest," he replied. 'She is a Roman Catholic, a pervert as we say, but still a very noble woman. Religious, too, in spite of the errors of Rome, one must confess it. A pity she ever left us, a great pity—but of course *her* loss as well as ours. We require such women now, though; but somehow we do not keep them. And I cannot think why."

"Too cold," Angelica's thoughts ran on. "Hollow, shallow, inconsistent—loveless. Catholicism equals a modern refinement of pagan principles with all the old deities on their best behaviour thrown in; while Protestantism is an ecclesiastical system founded on fetish——"

"You are a stranger in the neighbourhood?" the benevolent old clergyman was saying. "Only on a visit? Ah! then of course you don't know. They are a remarkable family, somewhat eccentric. Ideala, as they call her, is no relation, only an intimate friend of Lady Claudia Beaumont's, and of the Marquis of Dawne. The three are usually together. The New Order is an outcome of their ideas, a sort of feminine *vehmgericht* so well as I can make out. But no good can come out of that kind of thing, and I trust as you are a very young lady——"

"Not so young—I am twenty-two."

"Indeed!" with a smile and a bow—"I should not have thought you more than nineteen. But twenty-two is not a great age either! and I do hope you will not be drawn into that set. They are sadly misguided The ladies scoff at the wisdom of men, look for inconsistencies, and *laugh* at them—actually! It is very bad taste, you know; and they call it an impertinence for us to presume to legislate exclusively in matters which specially concern their sex, and also object to

the interference of the Church, as being a distinctly masculine organization, in the regulation of their lives. Men, they declare, have always said that they do not understand women, and it is of course the height of folly for them to presume to express opinions upon a subject they do not understand. Now, can anything be more absurd? And it is dangerous besides—absolutely dangerous."

"Yet I hear that they are very good women," the girl ventured, and Angelica thought that she detected a note of derision, levelled at the clerical exponent of these reprehensible ideas, beneath the demure remark.

"Oh, saintlike!" he answered cordially; "but still to blame. Misguided, you know, so I venture to warn you. How can they presume to reject proper direction? Their pride is excessive, but the Church will receive them, and extend her benefits to them still if only they will humble themselves——" Conversation over the room entered upon a *crescendo* passage at this moment, and Angelica lost the rest of the sentence in the general outburst.

A new voice presently claimed her attention. The speaker was a young man addressing another young man, and both had their backs turned to her, and were looking hard at a portrait of herself hung so low on the wall that they had to stoop to look into it.

"Painted by a good man," were the first words she heard.

"Rather fine face; who is it?"

"Daughter of the house, don't you know? Old duke's granddaughter. Married old Kilroy of Ilverthorpe."

"Ah! Then that was done some time ago, I expect."

"Oh, dear, no! Only last year. It was exhibited in the last Academy."

"Then she's still young?" He peered into the portrait once more with an evident increase of interest. "She looks as if she might be larky."

"Can't make her out, on my word, was the response, delivered in a tone of strong disapproval. "Married to an elderly chap—not old exactly, but a good twenty years older than herself; who gives her her head to an unlimited extent, yet she says she doesn't care to have a lot of men bothering about, and, by Jove! she acts as if she meant it. It's beastly unnatural, you know."

"Well, I must say I like a woman to be a woman," the other rejoined, surveying the portrait from this new point of

view. "But that's the way with all that Guthrie lot—and you know Dawne himself is *pi!*"—so what can you expect of the rest? the tone implied.

Suddenly Angelica felt her face flush. One of her ungovernable fits of fury was upon her. She sprang to her feet, upsetting her chair with a crash, and turned upon the two young men, who, recognizing her, changed colour and countenance, and shrank back apologetically.

Her uncle, seeing something wrong, had hurried across the room to her with anxious eyes.

"Who are those people?" she asked him, indicating the two young men.

Lord Dawne, always all courtesy and consideration himself, was shocked by her tone.

"I think you have met Captain Leicester before," he gravely reminded her. "Let me introduce——"

"No, for Heaven's sake!" Angelica broke forth, glaring angrily at the offenders.

She walked away abruptly with the words on her lips, leaving Lord Dawne to settle with the delinquents as he thought fit. Her mother, who was seated at the farther end of the room talking to a charming-looking old lady Angelica did not know, stretched out a hand to her as she approached, and drew her to a seat beside her; and instantly Angelica felt herself in another moral atmosphere.

"This is my daughter, Mrs. Kilroy of Ilverthorpe," Lady Adeline said to the old lady, then added smiling: "There are so many Mrs. Kilroys in this neighbourhood, one is obliged to specify. Angelica, dear, Mrs. Power."

Angelica bowed, and then leaned back in her chair so that she might not have to join in the conversation, but she listened in an absent sort of way, feeling soothed the while by the tone of refinement, of earnestness and sincerity, in which every word was uttered: "No, I am sure," Lady Adeline was saying, "I am sure no one who can judge would mistake that lineless calm for a device to cover all emotion."

"I never have done so myself," Mrs. Power rejoined, "although I do not know her history. But I should say, judging merely from observation, that the fineness of her countenance, which consists more in the expression of it than in either form or feature, though both are good, is the result of long self-repression, self-denial, and stern discipline, the evidence of a true and beautiful soul, and of a noble mind at rest after

some heavy sorrow, or some great temptation, which, being resisted, has proved a blessing and a source of strength."

Angelica wondered of whom they were speaking, and, following the direction of their eyes, met those of Ideala fixed a little sadly, a little wistfully, upon herself. Young people, as they grow up, find their own life's history so absorbingly interesting that they think little of what may have happened, or may be happening, to those whom they have always known as "grown up"; and it had never occurred to Angelica that any one of the placid, gentle-mannered women among whom she had always lived, in contrast to them herself as a comet is to the fixed stars, had ever experienced any extremes of emotion. Now, however, she felt as if her eyes had been suddenly opened, and she looked with a new interest at her old familiar friends, and wondered, her mind busy for the moment with what she had just heard. She could not keep it there, however; involuntarily it slipped away—back—back to that first attempt of hers to see the hidden wheels of life go round —the market-place, the Tenor.

Suddenly she felt as if she must suffocate if she did not get out into the air, and rising quickly she stole from the room, and out of the house unobserved. But the babble of voices seemed to pursue her. She stood for a moment on the steps and felt as if the people were all preparing to stream out of the drawing room after her, to surround her, and keep up the distracting buzz in her ears by their idle inconsequent talk. Their horses were prancing about the drive; their empty carriages, with cushions awry and wraps flung untidily down on the seats, or even hanging over the doors and grazing the dusty wheels, gave her a sense of disorder and discomfort from which she felt she must fly.

"Where to, ma'am, please?" the footman asked, touching his hat when he had closed the door.

"Fountain Towers," Angelica answered. She would go and see Dr. Galbraith.

When the carriage drew up under the porch at Fountain Towers, she sat some time as if unaware of the fact; but the footman's patient face as he waited with his hand on the handle of the door, ready to help her to descend, recalled her.

She walked into the house as she had always been accustomed to do, and instantly thoughts of Diavolo came crowding. Why had Diavolo ceased to be all in all to her? She asked herself the question through a mist of tears which gath-

ered in her eyes, but did not fall, and at the same moment her busy mind took note of the singular appearance of a statue on the staircase as she beheld it in blurred outline through her bedimmed vision.

She found Dr. Galbraith in the library sitting at his writing table. The door was half open, so she entered without knocking, and walked up to him.

He turned at the sound of her step, rose smiling, and held out his hand when he saw who it was.

"I have been thinking about you this afternoon," he remarked. "Sit down." But before she had settled herself his practised eyes had detected something wrong. "What is it?" he asked.

"Nerves," she answered. "Give me something."

He went to an inner room, and returned presently with a colourless draught in a medicine glass. She took it from him and drank it mechanically, and then he placed a cushion for her, and she leant back in the deep armchair, and closed her eyes. Dr. Galbraith looked at her for a few seconds seriously, and then returned to his writing. Presently Lord Dawne came in, and raised his eyebrows inquiringly when he saw Angelica, who seemed to be asleep.

"Overwrought," Dr. Galbraith replied to the silent inquiry.

"There was a *fracas* at Hamilton House just now," her uncle observed. "But how is all this going to end?"

"Well, of course; but you had better leave her to me."

Lord Dawne quietly withdrew.

"Oh, the blessed rest and peace of this place!" Angelica exclaimed shortly afterward.

Dr. Galbraith, who had resumed his writing, put down his pen again, and turned to her.

"Talk to me," she said. "I've lost my self-respect. I've lost heart. I'm a good-for-nothing worthless person. How am I to get out of this dreadful groove?"

"Live for others. Live openly," he answered slowly, looking up beyond her—into futurity—with a kindly light in his deep gray eyes, a something of hope, of confidence, of encouragement expressed in his strong plain face.

Angelica bowed her head. The familiar phrases had a new significance now, and diverted the stream of her reflections into another channel. She folded her hands on her lap and sat motionless once more, with her eyes fixed on the ground.

Dr. Galbraith was a specialist in mental maladies. He

knew exactly how much to say, and when to say it. If a text were as much as the patient required or could bear, he never made the mistake of preaching a sermon upon it in addition; and so for the third time he took up his pen and returned to his work, leaving Angelica engaged in sober thought, and happily quiescent.

CHAPTER III.

IT was late when at last she went home, but the drive of many miles in the fresh evening air helped to revive her. She had dreaded the return. The place seemed empty to her imagination, and strange and chill, as a south room in which we have sat and been glad with friends all the bright morning does, if by chance we return alone when the sun has departed.

And the place was dismal. There was no one to welcome her. Even her well-trained servants were out of the way for once, and she felt her heart sink as she crossed the deserted hall to go upstairs, and saw long lines of doors, shut for the most part, or, if open, showing big rooms beyond silent and tenantless. As she passed the library she had noticed her husband's chair half turned from his writing table, just as he had left it, probably, that very morning. It seemed a long time since then. He must have come to his journey's end—ages ago. She wondered if he had felt it as dreary on arriving as she did now, and an unaccustomed wish to be with him, in order to make things pleasanter for him, here obtruded itself. It was one of the least selfish thoughts she had had lately, and this was also one of the very few occasions on which his leaving her had not occasioned her a sense of liberty restored, which was the one unmixed delight she had hitherto experienced.

Her mind was racked by inconsistencies, but she did not perceive it herself, otherwise she must also have observed that she was running up the whole gamut of her past moods and experiences, only to find how unsatisfactory in its unstableness and futility was each. And she might still further have perceived how fatal the habit of living from day to day without any settled purpose, a mere cork of a creature on the waters of life at the mercy of every current of impulse, is to that permanent content to which a steady effort to do right at all events whatever else we may not do, and right only whatever happens,

alone gives rise, making thereof a sure foundation of quiet happiness out of which countless pleasures, known only to those who possess it, spring perceptibly—or to which they come like butterflies to summer flowers, enriching them with their beauty and vitality while they stay, and leaving them none the poorer when they depart, but rather, it may be, gainers, by the fertilizing memories which remain.

Angelica had gone to her room to dress for the evening as usual. She had no idea of shirking the ordinary routine of daily life because her mind was perturbed. But that duty over, she descended to the drawing room to wait until dinner should be announced, and so found herself alone with her own thoughts once more. She went to one of the fireplaces, and stood with her hands folded on the edge of the mantelpiece, and her forehead resting on them, looking down at the flowers and foliage plants which concealed the grate.

"You cannot go on like this, you know," she mentally ejaculated, apostrophising herself.

Then she became conscious of a great sense of loneliness, the kind of loneliness of the heart from which there is no escape except in the presence of one who knows what the trouble is and can sympathize. She had been half inclined to confide in Dr. Galbraith, and now she regretted she had not, but presently, passing into a contrary mood, she was glad; what good could he have done? And as for her husband, an empty house was better than a bad tenant. This was before dinner was announced; but afterward, at dinner, sitting in solitary state with the servants behind her, and a book to keep her in countenance, she made a grievance of his absence, and then sighed for such company as the seven more who were entertained in that house which was swept and garnished for another purpose, she fancied, but she could not recollect what, and it was too much trouble to try—so her thoughts rambled on uncontrolled—only she believed they were merry, and that was what she was not; but she would be very soon in spite of everything—in pursuance of which resolve she wrote several notes after dinner, asking people she knew well enough to kindly dispense with the ceremony of a long invitation and come and lunch with her to-morrow; and she dispatched a groom on horseback with the notes that there might be no delay. She even thought of making up a house party, but here her interest and energy flagged, and she left the execution of that project till next day.

Then she relapsed into her regretful discontented mood. If only—if only that wretched accident had never occurred, how different would her feelings have been at this moment, was one of her reflections as she sat alone on the terrace outside the great deserted reception rooms. She would have been waiting now till the house was quiet, and then she would have dashed up to her room to dress, with that exquisite sense of freedom which made the whole delight of the thing, and in half an hour she might have been the *Boy* with Israfil.

"You cannot go on like this, you know," Angelica repeated to herself. "You must do something."

But what? Involuntarily her mind returned to the Tenor. If she could win his respect she felt she could start afresh with a clear conscience and a steadfast determination to—what was it Dr. Galbraith had suggested? "Live openly. Live for others."

But how to win the Tenor back to tolerate her? If she would make him her friend she knew that she must be entirely true—in thought, word, and deed; to every duty, to every principle of right; and how could she be that if there were any truth in the theory of hereditary predisposition, coming as she did of a race foredoomed apparently to the opposite course? It was folly to contend with fate when fate took the form of a long line of ancestors who had made a family commandment for themselves, which was: "Be decent to all seeming! but sin all the same to your heart's content," and had kept it courageously—at least the men had—but then the women had been worthy—in which thought she suddenly perceived that there was food for reflection; for was not this contradictious fact a proof that it was a good deal a matter of choice after all? And here the Tenor's parting words recurred to her, and with them came the recollection of the impression made at the moment by the deep yet diffident tone of earnest conviction in which he had uttered that last assurance: "You will do some good in the world—you will be a good woman yet, I know—I know you will."

Should she? was the question she now asked herself. Were the words prophetic? she wondered. And from that moment her thoughts took a new departure, and she was able, as it were, to stand aloof and look back at herself as she had been, and forward to herself as she might yet become. In this quiet hour of retrospect she was quite ready to confess her sins. She was sincerely sorry she had deceived the Tenor. But why was

she sorry? Why, simply because he had found her out; simply because there was an end of a charming adventure—though less on that account than on others; for of course she knew that the end was near, that they must have parted soon in any case. It was the manner of the parting that caused her such regret. She had lost his affection, lost his confidence—lost the pleasure of his acquaintance, she supposed, which was more than she could bear. If he met her in the street he would probably look the other way. Would he? Oh! The very notion stung her. She sprang to her feet and threw up her hands; and then, as if goaded by a lash, but without any distinct idea, she ran down the steps headlong into the garden, and so on through the park till she came to the river. When she got there, she stopped at the landing place, not knowing why she had come, and as she stood there, trying to collect her thoughts, the absence of some familiar object forced itself upon her attention—her boat! It must have been lost the night of the accident. She did not know whether it had sunk or not, but there was no name on it, so that, even if it had been found, it could not have been restored to her unless she had claimed it. And while she thought this, she was conscious of another pang of regret. She knew that had the boat been there, her next impulse would have been to go to the Tenor just as she was, bareheaded, and in her thin evening dress. With what object, though? To beg for the honour of his acquaintance, she supposed! But, alas! she could not sneer in earnest, or laugh in earnest, at any absurdity she chose to think there was in the idea. For she acknowledged—in her heart of hearts she knew—that the acquaintance of such a man *was* an honour, especially to her, as she humbly insisted, although she had not broken any of the commandments, and never would, and never could.

Slowly she returned to the house. A servant met her on the terrace, and asked her if she should require anything more that night. Then she discovered the lateness of the hour, ordered the household to bed, and retired to her own room. There she extinguished the lights, threw the windows wider open, and sat looking out into the dim mysterious night.

Angelica loved the night. No matter what her mood might be she felt its charm, and something also of the pride-subduing, hallowed influence which is peculiarly its own; and now, as she leant, looking out, all the beauty of it, and its heavenly purity, began to steal into her heart and to soften it. Slowly, as the

tide goes out when the sea is tempestuous, the waves returning again and again with angry burst and flow to cover the same spot, as if loath to leave it, but receding inevitably till in the further distance their harsh impetuous roar sinks to a babble when heard from the place where they lately raged, which itself seems the safer for the contrast between the now of quiet and firmness and the then of shifting sand and watery fury; so it was with Angelica's turmoil of mind, the foaming discontent, the battling projects—by slow degrees, they all subsided; and after the storm of uncertainty there came something like the calm of a settled purpose. To be good, to ascend to the higher life—if that meant to feel like this always she would be good—if in her lay such power. She could not be wholly without religion, because she found in herself a reverence for what was religion in others. And what after all is religion? An attitude of the mind which develops in us the power to love, reverence, and practise all that constitutes moral probity. But how to attain to this? By trying and trusting. Faith, that was it, faith in the power of goodness. Upon the recognition of this simple truth, her spirit wings unfurled, and slowly, as her senses ceased to be importunate, she became possessed by some idea of deathless love and longing which fired her soul with its heroism, and filled her heart with its pathos, until both mind and hands together unconsciously assumed the attitude of prayer.

She did not go to bed at all that night, but just sat there by the open window, patiently waiting for the dawn. Nor did she feel the time long. Her whole being thrilled to this new sensation and was subdued by it, so that she remained motionless and rapturously absorbed. It might only last till daybreak; but while it did last, it was certainly intense.

It lasted longer than that, however. It even survived the day and the luncheon party to which she had in a rash moment invited her friends. She had determined to go to the Tenor that very afternoon in the way her husband had suggested.

At first she thought she would drive, but it was a long way round by the road, much longer than by the river, and so she decided to walk, although the weather was inclined to be tempestuous. She crossed by the ferry, thinking she would, if possible, meet the Tenor as he came away from the afternoon service. In that hope, however, she was disappointed, for when she got to the cathedral she found the service over,

the congregation dispersed, and the doors locked. There was nothing for it then but to go to his own house. With a fast beating heart she crossed the road, and paused at the little gate. She felt now that she had made a mistake. She should have taken her husband's advice and come in state; she would not have felt half so frightened and awkward if she could have sat in her carriage, and sent the footman to inquire if the Tenor would do her the favour to allow her to speak to him for a moment. And what would he say to her now? And what should she say? Suppose he refused to see her at all, should she ever survive it? Could she take him by storm as the Boy would have done, and demand his friendship and kind consideration as a right? Oh! for some of the unblushing assurance which had distinguished the Boy! It must have been part of the costume. But surely her confidence would return at the right moment, and then she would be able to face him boldly. Having to knock at the door and ask for him was like the first plunge into cold water. Just to think of it took her breath away. But the window was doubtless unfastened as usual; should she go in by that? No. It was absurd, though, how she hesitated, especially after all that had happened; but be deterred by this most novel and uncomfortable shyness she would not! She had come so far, and it should not be for nothing. She would not go back until——

But now, at last, with a smile at her qualms and nervous tremors, she knocked resolutely. There was a little interval before the knock was answered, and she filled it with hope. She knew just how radiant she would feel as she came away successful. She experienced something of the relief and pleasure which should follow upon this pain, and then the door was opened by the Tenor's elderly housekeeper. The woman had that worn and worried look upon her face which is common among women of her class.

"Is your master at home?" Angelica asked, not recollecting for the moment by what name he was known.

The woman looked at her curiously, as if to determine her social status before she committed herself. The question seemed to surprise her.

"He's gone," she answered dolefully. "Didn't you know?"

"Gone," Angelica echoed blankly. "Where?"

"Gone home," the woman answered.

"Gone home!" Angelica exclaimed, unable to conceal her dismay. "He has no home but this. Where is his home?"

The woman gave her another curious look, took a moment to choose her words, then blurted out: "He's dead, miss—didn't you know—and buried yesterday."

CHAPTER IV.

THE lonely man, after leaving Angelica that night, had returned to the Close, walking "like one that hath a weary dream." When he entered his little house, and the sitting room where the lamp was still burning, its yellow light in sickly contrast to the pale twilight of the summer dawn which was beginning to brighten by that time, the discomfort consequent on disorder struck a chill to his heart.

The roses still lay scattered about the floor, but they had been trampled under foot and their beauty had suffered, their freshness was marred, and their perfume, rising acrid from bruised petals, greeted him unwholesomely after the fresh morning air, and rendered the atmosphere faint and oppressive. The stand with the flower pots, much disarranged, stood as he had left it when he pulled it roughly aside to get at the grate, and the fire had burnt out, leaving blackened embers to add to the general air of dreariness and desertion. Angelica's violin lay under the grand piano where he had heedlessly flung it when he loosed it from her rigid grasp; and there were pipes and glasses and bottles about, chairs upset and displaced; books and papers, music and magazines, piled up in heaps untidily to be out of the way—all the usual signs, to sum up, which suggest that a room has been used over night for some unaccustomed purpose, convivial or the reverse, a condition known only to the early house-and-parlour maid as a rule, and therefore acting with peculiarly dismal effect upon the chance observer; but more dismal now to the weary Tenor than any room he had ever seen under similar circumstances by reason of the associations that clung about it.

He opened the window wide, extinguished the lamp, and began mechanically to put things away and arrange the chairs. The habit of doing much for himself prompted all this; anything that was not a matter of habit he never thought of doing. His things were drying on him, and he had forgotten that they had ever been wet. He had forgotten too that the night was past and over. He was heart sick and weary, yet did not feel that there was any need of rest. The extraordinary lucidity

of mind of which he had been conscious while his much loved "Boy" was in danger had left him now, and only a blurred recollection as of many incidents crowding thickly upon each other without order or sequence recurred to him. He suffered from a sense of loss, from an overpowering grief —the kind of grief which is all the worse to bear because it has not come in the course of nature but by the fault of man, a something that might have been helped as when a friend is killed by accident, or lost to us otherwise than by death the consequence of disease. But one persistent thought beset him, the same thing over and over again, exhausting him by dint of forced reiteration. The girl he had been idolizing—well, there was no such person, and there never had been; that was all—yet what an *all!* In the first moment of the terrible calamity that had befallen him, it seemed now that there could have been nothing like the misery of this home returning—the barren, black despair of it. It was the hopeless difference between pain and paralysis; then he had suffered, but at least he could feel; now he felt nothing except that all feeling was over.

When he had finished the simple arrangement of his room, he still paced restlessly up and down, shaking back his yellow hair, and brushing his hand up over it as if the gesture eased the trouble of his mind.

"If even the Boy had been left me!" he thought, and it was the one distinct regret he formulated.

After a while his housekeeper arrived, a pleasant elderly woman who had attended him ever since he came to Morningquest.

It was not in his nature to let any personal matter, whether it were pain or pleasure, affect the temper of his intercourse with those about him, and the force of habit helped him now again to rouse himself and greet the woman in his usual kindly, courteous way, so that, being unobservant, she noticed no change in him except that he was up earlier than usual; but then he was always an early riser. She therefore set about her work unsuspiciously, and presently drove him out of the sitting room with her dust-pan and brush, and he went upstairs. There, happening to catch a glimpse of his own haggard face and discreditable flannels in the mirror, he began to change mechanically, and dressed himself with all his habitual neatness and precision. Then a little choir boy came to be helped with his music. It was the one who sang the soprano

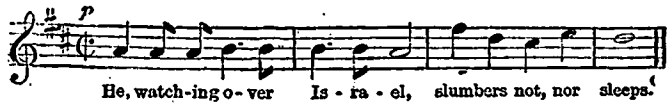
solos in the cathedral, a boy with a lovely voice and much general as well as musical ability, both of which the Tenor laboured to help him to develop. He came every morning for lessons, and the Tenor gave him these, and such a breakfast also as a small boy loves; but the little fellow, to do him justice, cared more for the Tenor than the breakfast.

There were three services in the cathedral that day, and the Tenor went to each, but he did not sing. He seemed to have taken cold and was hoarse, with a slight cough, and a peculiar little stab in his chest and catching of the breath, which, however, did not trouble him much to begin with. But as the day advanced every bone in his body ached with a dull wearying pain, and he was glad to go to bed early. Once there, the sense of fatigue was overpowering, yet he could not sleep until long past midnight, when he dropped off quite suddenly; or rather, as it seemed to him, when all at once he plunged headlong into the river to rescue the Boy, and began to go down, down, down, to a never-ending depth, the weight of the water above him becoming greater and greater till the pressure was unbearable, and a horrid sense of suffocation, increasing every instant, impelled him to struggle to the surface, but vainly. He could not rise—and down, down, he continued to descend, reaching no bottom, yet dropping at last, before he could help himself, on a sharp stake, pointed like a dagger, that ran right through his chest. The pain aroused him with a great start, but the impression had been so vivid, that it was some time before he could shake off the sensation of descending with icy water about him; and even when he was wide awake, and although he was bathed in perspiration, the feeling of cold remained, and so did the pain.

It was during that night that the weather changed.

The next day it was blowing a gale. Heavy showers began to fall at intervals, chilling the atmosphere, and finally settled into a steady downpour, such as frequently occurs in the middle of summer, making everything indoors humid and unwholesome, and causing colds and sore throats and other unseasonable complaints.

The Tenor taught his little choir boy as usual in the morning, went to the three services, getting more or less wet each time, and then came home and tried to do some work, but was not equal to it—his head ached; then tried to smoke, but the pipe nauseated him; and finally resigned himself to idleness, and just sat still in his lonely room, lonely of heart himself,

yet with his hands patiently folded, dreamily watching the rain as it beat upon the old cathedral opposite, and streamed from eave and gargoyle, and splashed from the narrow spouting under the roof, making spreading pathways of dark moisture for itself on the gray stone walls wherever it overflowed. It was all "His Will" to the Tenor, and for his sake there was nothing he would not have borne heroically.

His cough was much worse that day, the pain in his chest was more acute, and his temperature rose higher and higher, yet he did not complain. He knew he was suffering from something serious now, but he derived from his perfect faith in the beneficence of the Power that orders all things an almost superhuman fortitude.

But as he sat there with his hands folded, his mind, busy with many things, returned inevitably to the old weary theme, just as, at the same time, Angelica's own was doing, but from the opposite point of view. Always, after a startling event, those who have been present as spectators, or taken some part in it, repeat their experiences, and make some remark upon them, again and again in exactly the same words, their minds working upon the subject like heat upon water that boils, forming it into bubbles which it bursts and re-forms incessantly. He began each time with that remark of Angelica's about the change which mere dress effects, and went on to wonder at the transformation of a strong young woman into a slender delicate-looking boy by it; and then went on to accept her conclusion that it was natural he should have been deceived seeing that, in the first place, he had not the slightest suspicion, and in the second he had never seen the "Boy" except in his own dimly lighted room, or out of doors at night—besides, it was not the first time that a boy had been successfully personated by a girl, a man by a woman; but here he found himself obliged to rehearse the instances which Angelica had quoted. Then he would reconsider the fact that the part had been well played; not only attitudes and gestures, but ideas and sentiments, and the proper expression of them had

been done to perfection—which led up again to another assertion of hers. She had been a boy for the time being, there was no doubt about that. And yet if he had had the slightest suspicion! There had been the shyness at first, which had worn off as it became apparent that the disguise was complete; the horror of being touched or startled, of anything, as he now perceived, which might have caused a momentary forgetfulness, and so have led to self-betrayal; the boyishnesses which, alternating with older moods, might have suggested something, but had only charmed him; the womanishnesses of which, alas! there had been too few as seen by the light of this new revelation; the physical differences—but they had been cleverly concealed, as she said, by the cut of her clothing, and pads; the "funny head," however, about which they had both jested so often—oh, dear! how sick he was of the whole subject! If only it would let him alone! But what pretty ways he had had—the "Boy"! What a dear, dear lad he had been with all his faults! Alas! alas! if only the Boy had been left him!

Then a pause. Then off again. He had been enchanted, like Reymond of Lusignan in olden times, by a creature that was half a monster. The Boy had been a reality to him, but the lady had never been more than a lovely dream, and the monster—well, the monster had not yet appeared, for that dark haired girl in the unwomanly clothes, with pride on her lips and pain in her eyes, was no monster after all, but an erring mortal like himself, a poor weak creature to be pitied and prayed for. And the Tenor bowed his sunny head and prayed for her earnestly through all the long hours of solitary suffering which closed that day.

Then came another sleepless night, and another gloomy morning which brought his little chorister boy, whom he tried to teach as usual; but even the child saw what the effort cost him, and looked at him with great tender eyes solemnly, and was very docile.

Before the early service one of his fellow lay clerks came in to see how he was. They had all noticed the feverish cold from which he had appeared to be suffering the whole week, and this one, not finding him better, begged him to stay in that day and take care of himself for the sake of his voice. The Tenor brushed his hand back over his hair. He had forgotten that he ever had a voice. But at all events he must go to the morning service; after that he would stay at home. He

longed for the Blessed Sacrament, which was always a "Holy Communion" to him; but he did not say so.

That afternoon he fell asleep in his easy-chair facing the window which looked out upon the cathedral—or into a troubled doze rather, from which he awoke all at once with a start, and, seeing the window shut, rose hurriedly to go and open it for the "Boy." He had done so before at night often when he chanced to forget it. But when he got to it now he had to clutch the frame to support himself, and he looked out stupidly for some seconds, wondering in a dazed way why the sun was shining when it should be dark. Then suddenly full consciousness returned, and he remembered. He should never open the window again for the Boy, never again.

He returned to his chair after that, and sat down to think.

When he began to understand it thoroughly—the meaning of the last incident—he was startled out of the apathy that oppressed him.

It became evident now that he was not merely suffering, but fast becoming disabled by illness, and it was time he let someone know, otherwise there might be confusion and annoyance about—his work—finding a substitute; and there would be a risk about—about—what was he trying to think of? Oh, her name. He might mention it and be overheard by curious people if he lost his head—Angelica—Mrs. Kilroy of Ilverthorpe—he wished he could forget; but he would provide against the danger of repeating them aloud. He would telegraph to his own man—the fellow had written to him the other day, being in want of a place: a capital servant and discreet—glad he had thought of him. And then there were other matters—the sensible setting of his house in order which every man threatened with illness would be wise to see to. There were several letters he must write, one to the dean, amongst others, to ask him to come and see him. Writing was a great effort, but he managed with much difficulty to accomplish all that he had set himself to do, and then his mind was at rest.

Presently his old housekeeper came in with some tea. She was anxious about him.

"I've brought you this, sir," she said. "You've not tasted a solid morsel since Tuesday morning, and this is Thursday afternoon. Try and take something, sir, it will do you good. You must be getting quite faint, and indeed you look it."

"Now, I call that good of you," the Tenor answered hoarsely, as he took the cup from her hand. "I shall be glad

to have some tea. I've been quite longing for something hot to drink."

The woman was examining his face with critical kindness. She noticed the constant attempt to cough, and the painful catching of the breath which rendered the effort abortive.

"I am afraid you are not at all well, sir," she said, expecting him to deny it, but he did not.

"I am not at all well, to tell you the truth," he confessed. "I have just written to the dean to tell him, and——" a fit of coughing rendered the end of the sentence unintelligible. "I want you to post these letters," he was able to say at last distinctly; "send this telegram off at once to my servant, and leave this note at the deanery. That will do as you go home. The man should be here to-morrow, and anything else there may be can be attended to when he arrives."

"You'll let your friends know you're not very well, sir," the housekeeper suggested.

"Those letters"—indicating the ones she held in her hand—"are to tell them."

The woman seeing to whom the letters were addressed, and hearing the Tenor talk in an off-hand way about his manservant as if he had been accustomed to the luxury all his life, feared for a moment that his mind was affected; but then some of those wild surmises as to whom and what he might be, which were rife all over the ancient city when he first arrived, recurred to her, and there slipped from her unawares the remark: "Well, they always said you was *somebody*, and to look at you one might suppose you was a dook or a markis, sir, but I won't make so bold as to ask."

The Tenor smiled, "I am afraid I am only a Tenor with an abominable cold," he rejoined good-naturedly. "I really think I must nurse it a little. When I have seen the dean, I shall go to bed."

"You'll see the doctor first," she muttered decisively as she took up the tray and withdrew.

The Tenor overheard her, but was past making any objection. He had managed to take the tea, and, eased by the grateful warmth, he sank into another heavy doze from which the arrival of the doctor roused him. It was evening then.

He made an effort to rise in his courteous way to receive the doctor, was sorry to trouble him for anything so trifling as a cold, would not have troubled him in fact had not his officious old housekeeper taken the law into her hands; but

now that he had come was very glad to see him; singers, as the doctor knew, being fidgety about their throats; and really —with a smile—even a cold was important when it threatened one's means of livelihood.

The doctor responded cheerfully to these cheerful platitudes, but he was listening and observing all the time. Then he took out a stethoscope in two pieces, and as he screwed them together he asked:

"Been wet lately?"

"Well, yes," the Tenor answered—"something of that kind."

"And you did not change immediately?"

"N-no, now I think of it, not for hours. In fact, I believe my things dried on me."

"Ah-h-h!" shaking his head. "And you'd been living rather low before that, perhaps? (Just let me take your temperature.) I should say that you had got a little down—below par, you know, eh?"

"Well, perhaps," the Tenor acknowledged.

"Humph." The doctor glanced at his clinical thermometer. "You have a temperature, young man. Now let me—" he applied the stethoscope. "I am afraid you are in for a bad dose," he said after a careful examination. "I wish you had sent for me twenty-four hours sooner. These things should be taken in time. And it is marvellous how you have kept about so long. But now go to bed at once. Keep yourself warm, and the temperature as even as possible. It is all a matter of nursing; but I'll save——" he had been going to say "your life" but changed the phrase—"your voice, never fear!"

The Tenor smiled: "Pneumonia, I suppose?" he said interrogatively.

"I am sorry to say it is," the doctor answered as he rose to depart; "and double pneumonia, to boot. I'll send you something to take at once"—and he hurried away before the housekeeper had time to speak to him.

When the medicine arrived, however, she had the satisfaction of administering a dose to her master, and she begged at the same time that she might be allowed to stay in the house that night in case he wanted anything, but this the Tenor would not hear of. He did not think he should want anything—(he could think of nothing unfortunately but the risk of mentioning Angelica's name). She might come a little earlier in the morning and get him some tea; probably he would be

glad of some then. He was not going to get up in the morning, he really meant to take care of himself. The housekeeper coaxed, but in vain. There was no place for her to sleep in comfort, no bell to summon her, and as to sitting up all night that was out of the question; who would do her work in the morning? There would be plenty of people to look after him to-morrow. One night could make no difference.

Had she heard the doctor's orders she would have disobeyed her master, but as it was his manner imposed upon her, he spoke so confidently; and accordingly she left the house at the usual hour, to the Tenor's great relief.

When she had gone he was seized with an attack of hæmoptysis, and after he had recovered from that sufficiently he went to bed—or rather he found himself there, not knowing quite how it had come to pass, for the disease had made rapid progress in the last few hours, and he now suffered acutely, his temperature was higher, and the terrible sense of suffocation continued to increase.

It was at this time that the dean, in his comfortable easy-chair, looked up from the Tenor's note, and said to his wife deprecatingly: "He is ill, it seems, and wishes to see me. Do you think I need go to-night?"

"No, my dear, *certainly* not," was the emphatic reply. "There cannot be much the matter with him. I saw him out only yesterday or the day before. And at all events it will do in the morning. You must consider yourself."

So the dean stayed at home to lay up a lifelong regret for himself, but not with an easy conscience. He had a sort of feeling that it would be well to go, which his dislike to turning out on a raw night like that would not have outweighed without his wife's word in the scale.

Nothing was being done to relieve the Tenor. There were no medicines regularly administered, no soothing drinks for him, no equable temperature, no boiling water to keep the atmosphere moist with steam, the common necessaries of such a case; all these the Tenor, knowing his danger, had composedly foregone lest perchance in a moment of delirium he should mention a lady's name; and that he had had the foresight to do so was a cause of earnest thanksgiving to him when every breath of cold air began to stab like a knife through his lungs, and his senses wandered away for lengths of time which he could not compute, and he became conscious that he was uttering his thoughts aloud in spite of himself.

"It is not so very long till morning," he found himself saying once. "I will just lie still and bear it till then. I am drowsy enough—and in the morning——" but now all at once he asked himself, was there to be any more morning for him?

He was too healthy-minded to long for death, and too broken-hearted to shrink from it. His first feeling, however, when he realized the near prospect was nothing but a kind of mild surprise that it should be near, and even this was instantly dismissed. No more morning for him meant little leisure to think of her, and here he hastened to fold his hands and bow his golden head: "Lord, Lord," he entreated in the midst of his martyrdom, "make her a good woman yet."

The bells above him broke in upon his prayer. "Amen" and "amen," they seemed to say; and then the chime, full-fraught for him with promise, rang its constant message out, and as he listened his heart expanded with hope, his last earthly sorrow slipped away from him, and his soul relied upon the certainty that his final supplication was not in vain.

After this he was conscious of nothing but his own sufferings for a little. Then there came a blank; and next he thought he was singing.

He heard his own marvellous voice and wondered at it, and he remembered that once before he had had the same experiences, but when or where he could not recall. Now, he would fain have stopped; for every note was a dagger in his breast, yet he found himself forced to sing till at last the pain aroused him.

When full consciousness returned, a terrible thirst devoured him. What would he not have given for a drink!—something to drink, and someone to bring it to him.

What made him think of his mother just then? Where was his mother? It was just as well, perhaps, she should not be there to see him suffer.

He had never a bitter thought in his mind about any person or thing, nor did he dream of bemoaning the cruel fate which left him now at his death, as at his birth, deserted. What he did think of were the many kind people who would have been only too glad to come to his assistance had they but known his need.

But the torment of thirst increased upon him.

He thought of the dear Lord in *his* agony of thirst, and bore it for a time. Then he remembered that there must be water in the room. With great difficulty he got up to get it

for himself. His face was haggard and drawn by this time, and there were great black circles round his sunken eyes, but the expression of strength and sweetness had been intensified if anything, and he never looked more beautiful than then.

It seemed like a day's journey to the washstand. He reached it at last, however, reached it and grasped the carafe —with such a feeling of relief and thankfulness! Alas! it was empty. So also was the jug. The woman had forgotten for once to fill them, and there was not a drop of water to moisten his lips.

Tears came at this, and he sank into a chair. It was hard, and he was much exhausted, but still there was no reproach upon his lips. Presently he found himself in bed again with his pillows arranged so as to prop him up. The struggle for breath was awful, and he could not lie down. He had only to fight for a little longer, however, then suddenly the worst was over. And at the same moment, as it seemed to him, the chime rang out again triumphantly; and almost immediately afterward his first friend and foster father, the rough collier, grasped his hand. But he had scarcely greeted him when his second friend arrived, and bending over him called him as of old, "Julian, my dear, dear boy!" This reminded the Tenor. "Where *is* the Boy?" he said. "Is the window open? It is time he came."

"Israfil, I am here," was the soft response. The Tenor's face became radiant. All whom he had ever cared for were present with him, coming as he called them—even the dean, who was kneeling now beside his bed murmuring accustomed prayers. "What happiness!" The Tenor murmured. "I was so sorrowful this afternoon, and now! A happy death! a happy death! Ah, Boy, do you not see that he gives us our heart's desire? He slumbers not, nor sleeps," and the Tenor's face shone.

Then the chime was ringing again, and now it never ceased for him. He had sunk into the last dreamy lethargy from which only the clash of the bells above roused him hour by hour during the few that remained; but all sense of time was over; the hours were one; and so the beloved music accompanied him till his spirit rose enraptured to the glory of the Beatific Vision itself.

It was just at the dawn, when the Boy was wont to leave him, that, according to his ancient faith, the dear-earned

wings were given him, the angel guardian led him, and the true and beautiful pure spirit was welcomed by its kindred into everlasting joy.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN Angelica heard those dreadful words: "He's dead, miss, didn't you know? and buried yesterday"—her jaw dropped, and for a moment she felt the solid earth reel beneath her. The colour left her face and returned to it, red chasing white as one breath follows another, and she glared at the woman. For her first indignant thought was that she was being insulted with a falsehood. The thing was impossible; he could not be dead.

"And buried yesterday," the woman repeated.

"I don't believe you," Angelica exclaimed, stamping her foot imperiously.

The woman drew herself up, gave one indignant look, then turned her back, and walked into the house.

Angelica ran down the passage after her, and grasped her arm. "I beg your pardon," she said. "But, oh, do tell me —do make me understand, for I cannot believe it! I cannot believe it!"

The woman pushed open the sitting room door, and led her in.

"Was you a friend of his, miss—or ma'am?" she asked.

"I am Mrs. Kilroy of Ilverthorpe," Angelica answered. "Yes, I was a friend of his. I cared for him greatly. It is only a few days since I saw him alive and well. Oh! it isn't true! it isn't true!" she broke off, wringing her hands. "I cannot believe it!"

The woman sat down, threw her apron back over her face, and rocked herself to and fro.

Angelica, dazed and dry-eyed, stared at her stupidly. The shock had stunned her.

Presently the woman recovered herself, and seeing the lady's stony face, forgot her own trouble for the moment, and hastened to help her.

"I don't wonder you're took-to, my lady," she said. "It's bin a awful blow to a many, a awful blow. Oh! I never thought when they used to come and see him here in their fine carriages and with their servants and their horses and

that, as it was anything but the music brought 'em—tho', mind you, he was as easy with them as they with him. Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

Angelica's lips were so parched she could hardly articulate. "Tell me," she gasped, "tell me all. I cannot understand."

The woman fetched her some water. "Lie back a bit in this chair, ma'am," she said, "and I'll just tell you. It'll come easier when you know. When one knows, it helps a body. You see, ma'am, it was this way"—and then she poured forth the narrative of those last sad days, omitting no detail, and Angelica listened, dry-eyed at first, but presently she was seized upon by the pitifulness of it all, and then, like scattered raindrops that precede a heavy shower, the great tears gathered in her eyes and slowly overflowed, forerunners of a storm which burst at last in deep convulsive sobs that rent her, so that her suffering body came to the relief of her mind.

"I wanted to stay with 'im that last night and see to 'im," the housekeeper proceeded, "for the doctor's very words to me was, when I went to fetch 'im, before ever 'e had come to see what was the matter, 'e ses, knowing me for a many years, 'e ses, 'You'll look after 'im well, I'm sure, Mrs. Jenkins,' 'e ses, and I answered, 'Yes, sir, please God, I will,' for I felt as something was 'anging over me then, I did, tho' little I knowed what it was. And I did my best to persuade 'im to let me stay that night and nurse 'im, but 'e wouldn't hear of it; 'e said there wasn't no need; and what with the way 'e 'ad as you didn't like to go agin 'im in nothing, and what with 'is bein' so cheerful like, 'e imposed upon me, so I went away. Oh, it's been a bad business"—shaking her head disconsolately—"a bad business! To think of 'im bein' alone that night without a soul near 'im, and it 'is last on earth. He'd not 'ave let a dog die so, 'e wouldn't."

Angelica's sobs redoubled.

"But I couldn't rest, ma'am," the woman went on. "The whole night through I kep awaking up and thinking of 'im, and I 'eard every hour strike, till at last I couldn't stand it no longer, and I just got up and came to see 'ow 'e was. I'd 'a' bin less tired if I'd a sat up all night with 'im. And I came 'ere, and as soon as I opened the door, ma'am, there!" she threw her hands before her—"I knew there was something! For the smell that met me in the passage, it was just for all the world like fresh turned clay. But still I didn't think. It wasn't till afterward that I knowed it was 'is grave. And I

went upstairs, ma'am, not imaginin' nothin' neither, and tapped at 'is door, and 'e didn't answer, so I opens it softly, and ses: "Ow are you this mornin', sir?' I ses, quite softly like, in a whisper, for fear of wakin' 'im if 'e should be asleep. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I needn't 'a' bin so careful! And I ses it agin: 'Ow are you, sir, this mornin'?' I ses: 'I 'ope you 'ad a good night,' I ses; but still 'e didn't answer, and some'ow it struck me, ma'am, that the 'ouse was very quiet—it seemed kind of unnatural still, if you understand. So, just without knowin' why like, I pushed the door open"—showing how she did it with her hands—"little by little, bit by bit, all for fear of disturbing 'im, till at last I steps in, makin' no noise—Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" She threw her apron up over her face again, and rocked herself as she stood. "And there 'e was, ma'am," she resumed huskily, "propped up by pillows in the bed so as to be almost sittin', and the top one was a great broad pillow, very white, for 'e was always most pertic'lar about such things, and 'ad 'em all of the very best. And 'is face was turned away from me as I came in, ma'am, so that I only saw it sidewise, and just at first I thought 'e was asleep—very sound." She wiped her eyes with her apron, and shook her head several times. "And there's a little window to 'is room what slides along instead of openin' up," she proceeded when she had recovered herself sufficiently, "with small panes, and outside there's roses and honeysucklers, what made shadows that flickered, for the mornin' was gusty though bright, and they deceived me. I thought 'e was breathin' natural. But while I stood there the sun shone in and just touched the edges of 'is 'air, ma'am, and it looked for all the world like a crown of gold against the white pillows, it did, indeed—eh! ma'am, I don't wonder you take on!" This emphatically upon a fresh outburst of uncontrollable grief from Angelica. "For I ses to myself, when the light fell on 'is face strong like that, 'It's the face of a angel,' I ses—"but there!" raising her hands palms outward, slowly, and bringing them down to her knees again—"I can't tell you! But 'is lips were just a little parted, ma'am, with a sort o' look on 'em, not a smile, you understand, but just a look that sweet as made you feel like smilin' yourself! and 'is skin that transapparent you'd 'ave expected to see through it; but that didn't make me think nothin', for it was always so—as clear as your own, ma'am, if you'll excuse the liberty; and some folks said it was because he was a great lord in disguise, for such do 'ave fine

skins; and some said it was because 'e was so good, but I think it was both myself. But 'owever, ma'am, seein' 'e slept so sound, I made bold to creep in a little nearer, for 'e was a picter!" shaking her head solemnly—"'an' I was just thinkin' what a proud woman 'is mother would be if she was me to see 'im at that moment an' 'im so beautiful, when, ma'am"—but here her voice broke, and it was some seconds before she could add—"you might 'a' 'eard me scream at the cathedral. And after I 'ad screamed I'd 'a' given untold gold not to 'a' done it. For it seemed a sin to make a noise, and 'im so still. And, oh! ma'am, 'e'd bin dyin' the 'ole o' that last afternoon an' I never suspected 'e'd more nor a cold, though I knew it was bad. An' 'e'd bin alone the 'ole o' that blessed night a dyin', an' sensible they say to the last, an' not a soul to give 'im so much as a drink, an' the thirst awful, so I'm told. An' 'e'd been up to try an' get one for 'imself, for the bottle off the washstand was lyin' on the floor as if he'd dropped it out of 'is 'and—'e'd got up to get a drink for 'imself," she repeated impressively, "an' 'im dyin', ma'am, *and there wasn't a drop o' water there.* I knowed it—I knowed it the moment I see that bottle on the floor. I'd forgot to bring up any before I left the day before, though I ses to myself when I did the room in the mornin'—'I must fetch that water at once,' and never thought of it again from that moment."

"Oh, this is dreadful! dreadful!" Angelica moaned.

"Eh!" the woman ejaculated sympathetically. "And the 'ardest part of it was the way they came when it was too late. Everybody. An' me, 'eaven forgive me, thinkin' 'im out o' 'is mind when 'e wrote to 'em an' said they was 'is friends. There was 'is lordship the Markis o' Dawne, and 'is two sisters, an' that other great lady what is with 'em so much. An' they didn't say much any of 'em except 'er, but she wept an' wrung 'er 'ands, and blamed 'erself and everybody for lettin' the master 'ave 'is own way an' leaving 'im, as it seems it was 'is wish to be left, alone with some trouble 'e 'ad. But they 'ad come to see 'im, too, Dr. Galbraith and the Markis 'ad, many times, for I let 'em in myself, an' never thought nothin' of it in the way of their bein' friends of 'is, I thought they came about the music. Eh!" she repeated, "they didn't say much, any of 'em, but you could see, you could see! An' the dean came, an' you should 'a' 'eard 'm! full o' remorse, 'e was, ma'am, for not 'avin' come the night before, though 'e was asked. An' they all went upstairs to see 'm, an' 'im lyin'

there so quiet and all indifferent to their grief, yet with such a look of peace upon 'is face!. It was sweet and it was sad too; for all the world as if 'e'd bin 'urt cruel by somebody in 'is feelin's but 'ad forgiven 'em, an' then bin glad to go."

"Israfil! Israfil!" the wretched Angelica moaned aloud. She could picture the scene. Her Aunt Fulda, prayerful but tearless, only able to sorrow as saints and angels do; Ideala with her great human heart torn, weeping and wailing and wringing her hands; Aunt Claudia, hard of aspect and soft of heart, stealthily wiping her tears as if ashamed of them; Uncle Dawne sitting with his elbows on his knees and his face hidden in his hands; and Dr. Galbraith standing beside the bed looking down on the marble calm of the dead with a face as still, but pained in expression—Angelica knew them all so well, it was easy for her imagination to set them before her in characteristic attitudes at such a time; and she was not surprised to find that they had been friends of his although no hint of the fact had ever reached her. They were a loyal set in that little circle, and could keep counsel among themselves, as she knew; an example which she herself would have followed as a matter of course under similar circumstances, so surely does the force of early associations impel us instinctively to act on the principles which we have been accustomed to see those about us habitually pursue.

"An' they covered 'im with flowers, an' one or other of those great ladies in the plainest black dresses with nothin' except just white linen collar an' cuffs, stayed with 'im day an' night till they took 'im to 'is long 'ome yesterday," the woman concluded.

Then there was a long silence, broken only by Angelica's heavy sobs.

"Can't I do nothin' for you, ma'am?" the housekeeper asked at last.

"Yes," Angelica answered; "leave me alone awhile."

And the woman had tact enough to obey.

Then Angelica got up, and went and knelt by the Tenor's empty chair, and laid her cheek against the cold cushion.

"It isn't true, it isn't true, it isn't true," she wailed again and again, but it was long before she could think at all; and her dry eyes ached, for she had no more tears to shed.

Presently she became aware of a withered rose in the hollow between the seat of the chair and the back. She knew it must

be one of those she had thrown at him that night, perhaps the one he had carelessly twirled in his hand while they talked, now and then inhaling its perfume as he listened, watching her with quiet eyes.

"Dead! dead!" she whispered, pressing the dry petals to her lips.

Then she looked about her.

The light of day, falling on a scene which was familiar only by the subdued light of a lamp, produced an effect as of chill and bareness. She noticed worn places in the carpet, and a certain shabbiness from constant use in everything, which had not been visible at night, and now affected her in an inexpressibly dreary way. There was very little difference really, and yet there was *some* change which, as she perceived it, began gradually to bring the great change home to her. There was the empty chair, first relic in importance and saddest in significance. There were his pipes neatly arranged on a little fretwork rack which hung where bell handles are usually put beside the fireplace. She remembered having seen him replace one of them the last time she was there, and now she went over and touched its cold stem, and her heart swelled. The stand of ferns and flowers which he had arranged with such infinite pains to please the "Boy" stood in its accustomed place, but ferns and flowers alike were dead or drooping in their pots, untended and uncared for, and some had been taken away altogether, leaving gaps on the stand, behind which the common grate, empty, and rusted from disuse, appeared.

There was dust on her violin case, and dust on his grand piano—her violin which he kept so carefully. She opened the violin case expecting to find the instrument ruined by water. But no! it lay there snugly on its velvet cushion without a scratch on its polished surface or an injured string. She understood. And perhaps it had been one of his last conscious acts to put it right for her. He was always doing something for her, always. They said now that his income had been insufficient, or that he gave too much away, and that the malady had been rendered hopeless from the first by his weakness for want of food. The woman who waited on him had told her so. "He'd feed that chorister brat what come every morning," she said, "in a way that was shameful, but his own breakfast has been dry bread and coffee, without neither sugar nor milk, for many and many a day—and his

dinner an ounce of meat at noon, with never a bite nor sup to speak of at tea, as often as not."

"O Israfil! Israfil!" she moaned when she thought of it. There had always been food, and wine too, for that other hungry "Boy," food and wine which the Tenor rarely touched —she remembered that now. To see the "Boy" eat and be happy was all he asked, and if hunger pinched him, he filled his pipe and smoked till the craving ceased. She saw it all now. But why had she never suspected it, she who was rolling in wealth? His face was wan enough at times, and worn to that expression of sadness which comes of privation, but the reason had never cost her a thought. And it was all for her —or for "him" whom he believed to be near and dear to her. No one else had ever sacrificed anything for her sake, no one else had ever cared for her as he had cared, no one else would ever again. Oh, hateful deception! She threw herself down on her knees once more.

"O Israfil! Israfil!" she cried, "only forgive me, and I will be true! only forgive me, and I will be true!"

It was trying to rain outside. The wind swept down the Close in little gusts, and dashed cold drops against the window pane, and in the intervals sprays of the honeysuckle and clematis tapped on the glass, and the leaves rustled. This roused her. She had heard them rustle like that on many a moonlight night—with what a different significance! And he also used to listen to them, and had told her that often when he was alone at night and tired, they had sounded like voices whispering, and had comforted him, for they had always said pleasant things. Oh, gentle loving heart, to which the very leaves spoke peace, so spiritually perfect was it! And these were the same creepers to which he had listened, these that tapped now disconsolately, and this was his empty chair—but where was he? he who was tender for the tiniest living thing —who had thought and cared for everyone but himself. What was the end of it all? How had he been rewarded? His hearth was cold, his little house deserted, and the wind and the rain swept over his lonely grave.

She went to the window and opened it. She would go to his grave—she would find him.

While she stood on the landing stage at the watergate waiting for the flat ferry boat, which happened to be on the farther side of the narrow river, to be poled across to her, the Tenor's little chorister boy came up and waited too. He had a rustic

posy in his hand, but there was no holiday air in his manner; on the contrary, he seemed unnaturally subdued for a boy, and Angelica somehow knew who he was, and conjectured that his errand was the same as her own. If so he would show her the way.

The child seemed unconscious of her presence. He stepped into the boat before her, and they stood side by side during the crossing, but his eyes were fixed on the water and he took no notice of her. On the other side of the landing when they reached it was a narrow lane, a mere pathway, between a high wall on the one hand and a high hedge on the other, which led up a steep hill to a road, on the other side of which was a cemetery. The child followed this path, and then Angelica knew that she had been right in her conjecture, and had only to follow him. He led her quite across the cemetery to a quiet corner where was an open grassy space away from the other graves. Two sides of it were sheltered by great horse chestnuts, old and umbrageous, and from where she stood she caught a glimpse of the city below, of the cathedral spire appearing above the trees, of Morne in the same direction, a crest of masonry crowning the wooded steep, and, on the other side, the country stretching away into a dim blue hazy distance. It was a lovely spot, and she felt with a jealous pang that the care of others had found it for him. In life or death it was all the same; he owed her nothing.

The grass was trampled about the grave; there must have been quite a concourse of people there the day before. It was covered with floral tokens, wreaths and crosses, with anchors of hope and hearts of love, pathetic symbols at such a time.

But was he really there under all that? If she dug down deep should she find him?

The little chorister boy had gone straight to the grave and dropped on his knees beside it. He looked at the lovely hothouse flowers and then glanced ruefully at his own humble offering—sweetwilliam chiefly, snapdragon, stocks, and nasturtium. But he laid it there with the rest, and Angelica's heart was wrung anew as she thought of the tender pleasure this loving act of the child would have been to the Tenor. Yet her eyes were dry.

The boy pressed the flowers on the grave as if he would nestle them closer to his friend, and then all at once as he patted the cold clay his lip trembled, his chest heaved with

sobs, his eyes overflowed with tears, and his face was puckered with grief.

Having accomplished his errand, he got up from the ground, slapped his knees to knock the clay off them, and, still sniffing and sobbing, walked back the way he had come in sturdy dejection.

All that was womanly in Angelica went out to the poor little fellow. She would like to have comforted him, but what could she say or do? Alas! alas! a woman who cannot comfort a child, what sort of a woman is she?

Presently she found herself standing beside the river looking up to the iron bridge that crossed it with one long span. There were trees on one side of the bridge, and old houses piled up on the other picturesquely. Israfil had noticed them the last time they rowed down the river. The evening was closing in. The sky was deepening from gray to indigo. There was one bright star above the bridge. But why had she come here? She had not come to see a bridge with one great star above it! nor to watch a sullen river slipping by—unless, indeed—— She bent over the water, peering into it. She remembered that after the first plunge there had been no great pain—and even if there had been, what was physical pain compared to this terrible heartache, this dreadful remorse, an incurable malady of the mind which would make life a burden to her forevermore, if she had the patience to live? Patience and Angelica! What an impossible association of ideas! Her face relaxed at the humour of it, and it was with a smile that she turned to gather her summer drapery about her, bending sideways to reach back to the train of her dress, as the insane fashion of tight skirts, which were then in vogue, necessitated. In the act, however, she became aware of someone hastening after her, and the next moment a soft white hand grasped her arm and drew her back.

"Angelica! how can you stand so near the edge in this uncertain light? I really thought you would lose your balance and fall in."

It was Lady Fulda who spoke, uttering the words in an irritated, almost angry tone, as mothers do when they relieve their own feelings by scolding and shaking a child that has escaped with a bruise from some danger to life and limb. But that was all she ever said on the subject, and consequently Angelica never knew if she had guessed her intenion or only been startled by her seeming carelessness, as she professed to be.

The sudden impulse passed from Angelica, as is the way with morbid impulses, the moment she ceased to be alone. The first word was sufficient to take her out of herself, to recall her to her normal state, and to readjust her view of life, setting it back to the proper focus. But still she looked out at the world from a low level, if healthy; a dull, dead level, the mean temperature of which was chilly, while the atmosphere threatened to vary only from stagnant apathy to boisterous discontent, positive, hopeless, and unconcealed.

Moved by common consent, the two ladies turned from the river, and walked on slowly together and in silence. The feeling uppermost in Angelica's mind was one of resentment. Her aunt had appeared in the same unexpected manner at the outset of her acquaintance with the Tenor, and she objected to her reappearance now, at the conclusion. It was like an incident in a melodrama, the arrival of the good influence—it was absurd; if she had done it on purpose, it would have been impertinent.

The entrance to Ilverthorpe was only a few hundred yards from where they had met, and they had now reached a postern which led into the grounds. Angelica opened it with a latch-key and then stood to let her aunt pass through before her.

"I suppose you will come in," she said ungraciously.

But Lady Fulda forgave the discourtesy, and the two walked on together up to the house—passing, while their road lay through the park, under old forest trees that swayed continually in a rising gale; and somewhat buffeted by the wind till they came to a narrow path sheltered by rows of tall shrubs, on the thick foliage of which the rain, which had fallen at intervals during the day, had collected, and now splashed in their faces or fell in wetting drops upon their dresses as the bushes, struck by the heavy gusts, swayed to and fro.

Angelica, whose nervous system was peculiarly susceptible to discomfort of the kind, felt more wretched than ever. She thought of the desolate grave with mud-splashed, bedraggled flowers upon it and of the golden head and beautiful calm face beneath; thought of him as we are apt to think of our dead at first, imagining them still sentient, aware of the horror of their position, crushed into their narrow beds with a terrible weight of earth upon them, left out alone in the cold, uncomforted and uncared for, while those they loved and trusted most recline in easy chairs round blazing fires, talking forgetfully.

Something like this flashed through Angelica's mind, and a cry as of acute pain escaped from her unawares.

Her companion's features contracted for a moment, but otherwise she made no sign of having heard.

They had not exchanged a word since they had entered the grounds, but now the gentle Lady Fulda began again—with some trepidation, however, for Angelica's manner continued to be chilling, not to say repellent, and she could not tell how her advances would be received.

"I was looking for you," she said.

"For me?" raising her eyebrows.

"Yes. I went to his house this afternoon and heard from the housekeeper that a young lady had been there, and I felt sure from the description and—and likelihood—that it must be you. She said you had been wholly unprepared for the dreadful news, and it had been a great shock to you. And I thought you would probably go to see his grave. It is always one's first impulse. And I was going to look for you there when I saw you in the distance on the towing path."

Angelica preserved her ungracious silence, but her attention was attracted by the way in which her aunt spoke of the Tenor in regard to herself, apparently as if she had known of their intimacy. Lady Fulda resumed, however, before Angelica had asked herself how this could be.

"I am afraid you will think me a very meddling person," she said, speaking to her young niece with the respect and unassuming diffidence of high breeding and good feeling; "but perhaps you know—how one fancies that one can do something—or say something—or that one ought to try to. I believe it is a comfort to one's self to be allowed to try."

"Yes," Angelica assented, thinking of her desire to help the child, and thawing with interest at this expression of an experience similar to her own. "I felt something of that—a while ago."

They had reached the house by this time, and Angelica ushered her aunt in, then led her to the drawing room where she herself usually sat, the one that opened onto the terrace. This was the sheltered side of the house that day, and the windows stood wide open, making the room as fresh as the outer air. They sat themselves down at one of them from which they could see the tops of trees swaying immediately beneath, and further off the river, then the green upland terminating in a distance of wooded hills.

"I always think this is prettier than the view from Morne, although not so fine," Lady Fulda remarked tentatively. She was a little afraid of the way in which Angelica in her present mood might receive any observation of hers, however inoffensive. She had been looking out of the window when she spoke, but the silence which followed caused her to turn and look at Angelica. The latter had risen for some purpose—she could not remember what—and now stood staring before her in a dazed way.

"I am afraid you are not well, dear," Lady Fulda said, taking her hand affectionately.

"Oh, I am well enough," Angelica answered, almost snatching her hand away, and making a great effort to control another tempest of tears which threatened to overwhelm her. "But don't—don't expect me to be polite—or anything—to-day. You don't know——" She took a turn up and down the room, and then the trouble of her mind betrayed her. "O Aunt Fulda!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands, and wringing them, "I have done such a dreadful thing!"

"I know," was the unexpected rejoinder.

Angelica's hands dropped, and she stared at her aunt, her thoughts taking a new departure under the shock of this surprise. "Did he tell you?" she demanded.

"No," Lady Fulda stammered. "I saw you with him—several times. At first I thought it was Diavolo, and I did not wonder, he is so naughty—or rather he used to be. But when I asked with whom he was staying, everybody was amazed, and maintained that he had not been in the neighbourhood at all. So I wrote to him at Sandhurst, and his reply convinced me that I must have been mistaken. Then I began to suspect. In fact I was sure——"

Lady Fulda spoke nervously, and with her accustomed simplicity, but Angelica felt the fascination of the singular womanly power which her aunt exercised, and resented it.

"Is that all!" she said defiantly. "Why didn't you interfere?"

"For one thing, because I did not like to."

"Why?"

"On your account."

"Did you know I was deceiving him?"

"Yes—or you would not have been with him under such circumstances," Lady Fulda rejoined; "and then—I thought, upon the whole, it was better not to interfere"—she broke off,

recurring once more to Angelica's question. "I was sure he would find you out sooner or later, and then I knew he would do what was right; and in the meantime the companionship of such a man under any circumstances was good for you."

"You seem to know him very well."

"Yes," Lady Fulda answered. "He was at the University with your Uncle Dawne and George Galbraith. They were great friends, and used to come to the castle a good deal at that time, but eventually Julian's visits had to be discontinued."

Lady Fulda coloured painfully as she made this last statement, and Angelica, always apt to put two and two together, instantly inserted this last fragment into an imperfect story she possessed of a love affair and disappointment of her aunt's, and made the tale complete.

She had heard that

> . . . never maiden glow'd,
> But that was in her earlier maidenhood,
> With such a fervent flame of human love,
> Which being rudely blunted glanced and shot
> Only to holy things; to prayer and praise
> She gave herself, to fast and alms.

They must have been about the same age, Angelica reflected, as she examined the lineless perfection of Lady Fulda's face, and then there glanced through her mind a vision of what might have been—what ought to have been as it seemed to her: "But why should he have been banished from the castle because you cared for him?" she asked point blank.

Lady Fulda's confusion increased. "That was not the reason," she faltered, making a brave effort to confide in Angelica in the hope of winning the latter's confidence in return. "There was a dreadful mistake. Your grandfather thought he was paying attention to me, and spoke to him about it, telling him I should not be allowed to marry—beneath me; and Julian said, not meaning any affront to me,—never dreaming that I cared,—that he had not intended to ask me, which made my father angry and unreasonable, and he scolded me because he had made a mistake. Men do that, dear, you know; they have so little sense of justice and self-control. And I had little self-control in those days, either. And I retorted and told my father he had spoilt my life, for I thought it would have been different if he had not interfered. However, I don't know"; she sighed regretfully. "But when

such absolute uncertainty prevailed it was impossible to say that Julian was beneath me by birth, and as to position—— But, there"—she broke off, "of course he never came amongst us any more."

"Otherwise I should have known him all my life," Angelica exclaimed, "and there would have been none of this misery."

They had returned to their seats, and she sat now frowning for some seconds, then asked her aunt: "Does Uncle Dawne know—did you tell him about my escapade?"

"No."

"You are a singularly reticent person."

"I am a singularly sore-hearted one," Lady Fulda answered, "and very full of remorse, for I think now—I might have done something—to prevent——" she stammered.

"The final catastrophe," Angelica concluded. "Then you are laying his death at my door?"

"Oh, no; Heaven forbid!" her aunt protested.

A long pause ensued, which was broken by Lady Fulda rising.

"It is time I returned," she said. "Come back with me to Morne. It will be less miserable for you than staying here alone to-night."

Angelica looked up at her for a second or two with a perfectly blank countenance, then rose slowly. "How do you propose to return?" she asked.

"I had not thought of that—I left the carriage in Morningquest," Lady Fulda answered.

"Really, Aunt Fulda," Angelica snapped, then rang the bell impatiently; "you can't walk back to Morningquest, and be in time for dinner at the castle also, I should think. The carriage immediately," this was to the man who had answered the bell.

"You will accompany me?" Lady Fulda meekly pleaded.

"I suppose so," was the ungracious rejoinder—"that is if you will decide for me. I am tired of action. I just want to drift."

"Come, then," said Lady Fulda kindly.

CHAPTER VI.

"I AM tired of action, I just want to drift. I am tired of action, I just want to drift," this was the new refrain which set itself as an accompaniment to Angelica's thoughts. She was tired of thinking too, but thought ran on, an inexhaustible stream; and the more passive she became to the will of others outwardly, the more active was her mind.

She leant back languidly in the carriage beside her aunt as they drove together through the city to Morne, and remained silent the whole time, and motionless, all but her eyes, which roved incessantly from object to object while she inwardly rendered an account to herself of each, and of her own state of mind; keeping up disjointed comments, quotations, and reflections consciously, but without power to check the flow.

There were a few blessed moments of oblivion caused by the bustle of their departure from the house, then Angelica looked up, and instantly her intellect awoke. They were driving down the avenue—"The green leaves rustle overhead," was the first impression that formulated itself into words. "The carriage wheels roll rhythmically. Every faculty is on the alert. There is something unaccustomed in the aspect of things—things familiar—this once familiar scene. A new point of view; the change is in me. We used to ride down that lane. Blackberries. The day I found a worm in one. Ugh! Diavolo, Diavolo—no longer in touch—a hundred thousand miles away—what does it matter? I am tired of action; I just want to drift. I am tired of action; I just want to drift, just want to drift—drifting now to Morne—a restful place; but I shall drift from thence again. Whither? Better be steered—no, though. I am not a wooden ship to be steered, but a human soul with a sacred individuality to be preserved, and the grand right of private judgment. What happens when such ennobling privileges are sacrificed? Demon worship—grandpapa.

"The old duke sat in his velvet cap in a carved oak chair in the oriel room—nonsense! And Aunt Fulda. As passive as a cow. Is she though? Is Angelica as passive as a cow for all that she's so still? Poor Daddy! Drudging at the House just now, not thinking of me. I hope not. Do I hope not? No, he belongs to me, and—I *do* care for him. The kind eyes, the kind caress, the kind thought. 'Angelica, dear'—

O Daddy! I'm sorry I tormented you—sorry, sorry—The lonely grave, the lonely grave—O Israfil! 'Dead, dead, long dead, and my heart is a handful of dust.' The horses' hoofs beat out the measure of my misery. The green leaves rustle overhead. The air is delicious after the rain. The dust is laid. Only this afternoon. I went to see him; what was I thinking of? Can I bring him back again? Never again! Never again! Only this afternoon, but time is not measured by minutes. Time is measured by the consciousness of it. 'He's dead, miss—haven't you heard? and buried yesterday.' 'Dead, dead, long dead——'

> "The dearest friend to me, the kindest man,
> The best conditioned and unwearied spirit
> In doing courtesies.

"On through the dim rich city. A pretty girl and poor. Do you envy me, my dear? Stare at me hard. I am a rich lady, you see, asked everywhere:

> "The daughter of a hundred Earls,
> You are not one to be desired.

"The Palace—poor Edith! Here we are at the Castle Hill—and that idiot Aunt Fulda has forgotten her carriage. Shall I remind her? There is still time to turn back. No, don't trouble yourself. 'Let them alone and they'll come home.' I wish I had no memory. It is a perfect nuisance to have to think in inverted commas all the time. And Shakespeare is the greatest bore of all. The whole of life could be set to his expressions—that cannot be quite right; what I mean is the whole of life could be expressed in his words. Diavolo and I tried once to talk Shakespeare for a whole day. I made the game. But Diavolo could remember nothing but 'To be or not to be,' which went no way at all when he tried to live on it, so he said Shakespeare was rot and I pulled his hair—I wish I could stop thinking—suspend my thoughts—The pine woods:

> "From the top of the upright pine
> The snowlumps fall with a thud,
> Come from where the sunbeams shine
> To lie in the heart of the mud—

The heart of the mud, the heart of the mud—Oh, for oblivion! Nirvana—'The Dewdrop slips into the shining sea'—We're

slipping into the courtyard of the castle. How many weary women, women waiting, happy women, despairing women, thoughtful women, thoughtless women, have those rows of winking windows eyed as they entered? Women are much more interesting than men—The lonely grave, the lonely grave——"

"Angelica!" Lady Fulda exclaimed as they drew up at the door, "I've left the carriage in Morningquest!"

"Yes, I know," said Angelica.

"My dear child, why didn't you remind me?"

Angelica shrugged her shoulders. "Let them alone and they'll come home," recurred to her, and then: "I must be more gracious. Aunt Fulda"—aloud—"who are here?"

"Your Uncle Dawne——"

"And Co., I suppose!" Angelica concluded derisively.

"Your Aunt Claudia and her friend are also here," Lady Fulda corrected her with dignity.

"Not exactly a successful attempt to be gracious," Angelica's thoughts ran on. "Ah, well! What does it matter? Live and let live, forget and forgive—forgetting *is* forgiving, and everyone forgets"—and then again *piano*—"The lonely grave, the lonely grave."

At dinner she sat beside her grandfather; her uncle being opposite, silent and serious as usual. But they were all subdued that night except the old duke, who, unaware of any cause for their painful preoccupation, and glad to see Angelica, who roused him as a rule with her wonderful spirits, chatted inconsequently. But Angelica's unnatural quietude could not escape the attention of the rest of the party, and inquiring glances were directed to Lady Fulda, in the calm of whose passionless demeanour, however, there was no consciousness of anything unusual to be read; and of course no questions were asked.

In the drawing room, after dinner, Angelica sat on a velvet cushion at her uncle's feet, and rested her head against his knee. Close beside her there was a long narrow mirror let into the wall of the room like a panel, and in this she could see herself and him reflected. At first she turned from the group impatiently; but presently she looked again, and began to study her uncle's appearance with conscious deliberation. It was as if she had never seen him before and was receiving a first impression.

Lord Dawne was one of those men who make one think of

another and more picturesque age. He would have looked natural in black velvet and point lace. He was about five and thirty at that time, to judge by his appearance—tall, well-made, and strong with the slim strength of a race horse, all superfluous flesh and bone bred out of him. His skin was dark, clear, and colourless; his hair black, wavy, and abundant; his eyes deep blue, a contrast inherited from an Irish mother. "A Spanish hidalgo in appearance," Angelica decided at this point.

It was a sad face, as high-bred faces often are. You would not have been surprised to hear that his life had been blighted at the outset by some great sorrow or disappointment. But it was a strong face too, the face of a manly man, you would have said, and of one with self-denial, courage, endurance, and devotion enough for a hero and a martyr.

"Angelica," her grandfather broke in upon her reflections with kindly concern. "You look pale. Do you not feel well, my dear child?"

"Not exactly, thank you," Angelica answered mendaciously, with formal politeness, hoping thereby to save herself the annoyance of further remarks; then inwardly added, "sick at heart, in very truth," to save her conscience, which was painfully sensitive just then. When anyone addressed her, thought was suspended by the effort to answer, after which the rush returned, but the current had usually set in a new direction, as was now the case. Her uncle, as seen in the mirror, gave place, when she had spoken, to the Tenor's long low room as she had seen it that afternoon; "The light shone in and showed the shabby places. Should the light be shut out to conceal what is wrong? Oh, no! Show up, expose, make evident. Let in knowledge, the light——"

But here her grandfather arose. The evening was to end with service in the chapel. "Will you come, Angelica?" he asked. "Do you feel equal to the exertion?"

"Oh, yes," Angelica answered indifferently, letting herself go again to drift with the stream.

The private chapel at Morne was lavishly decorated, an ideal shrine the beauty of which alone would have inclined your heart to prayer and praise by reason of the pleasure it gave you, and of the desire, which is always a part of this form of pleasure, to express your gratitude in some sort.

On this occasion the altar was brilliantly illuminated, and as she passed in before Lord Dawne, she was attracted like a

child by the light, and stationed herself so as to see it fully, admiring it as a spectator, but only so. The scene, although familiar, was always impressive, being so beautiful; and as she settled herself on a chair apart her spirit revived under its influence enough to enable her to entertain the hope that, by force of habit and association, that sensation of well-being which is due to the refined and delicate flattery of the senses, a soothing without excitement, merging in content, and restful to the verge of oblivion, would steal over her and gradually possess her to the exclusion of all importunate and painful thought. And this was what happened.

It came at a pause in the service when the people bent their heads, and seemed to wait; or rather followed upon that impressive moment as did the organ prelude, and the first notes of a glorious voice—the voice of a woman who suddenly sang.

Angelica looked up amazed by the fervour of it, while a feeling, not new, but strange from its intensity, took possession of her, steeping her soul in bliss, a feeling that made her both tremble and be glad. She thought no more of the lonely grave, but of an angel in ecstasy, an angel in heaven. She looked around, she raised her eyes to the altar, she tried to seize upon some idea which should continue with her, and be a key with which she could unlock this fountain of joy hereafter when she would. She almost felt for the moment as if it would be worthy to grovel for such opium at the knees of an oleosaccharine priest and contribute to his support forever. She tried to think of something to which to compare the feeling, but in vain. In the effort to fix it her mind and memory became a blank, and for a blissful interval she could not think, she could only feel. Then came the inevitable moment of grateful acknowledgment when her senses brought of their best to pay for their indulgence—their best on this occasion being that vow to Israfil which presently she found herself renewing. She would indeed be true.

After this surfeit of sensuous distraction she retired to her room, the old room, as far away from Diavolo's as possible, which she had always occupied at the castle. She dismissed her maid, and sat down to think; but she was suffering from nervous irritability by this time, and could not rest. She drew up a blind and looked out of the open window. The night was calm, the air was freshly caressing, a crescent moon hung in the indigo sky, and there were stars, bright stars. Up from

the pine woods which clothed the castle hill balsamic airs were wafted, and murmurs came as of voices inviting—friendly voices of nature claiming a kinship with her, which she herself had recognized from her earliest childhood. Out there in the open was the unpolluted altar at which she was bidden to worship, and in view of that, with the healthy breath of night expanding her lungs revivingly, she felt that her late experiences, in the midst of perfumes too sweet to be wholesome, and with the help of accessaries too luxurious to be anything but enervating, had been degrading to that better part of her to which the purity and peace of night appealed. She would go shrive herself in haunted solitudes, and listen to the voice which spoke to her heart alone, saying "Only be true," in the silence of those scenes incomparable which tend to reverence, promote endeavour, and prolong love.

She went to her door, opened it, looked out, and listened. The corridor was all in darkness; an excessive silence pervaded the place; the whole household had apparently retired.

With confident steps, although in the dark, Angelica went to Diavolo's room, and presently returned with a suit of his clothes. These she put on, and then, without haste, went downstairs, crossed the hall, opened a narrow door which led into a dark, damp, flagged passage, along which she groped for some distance, then descended a crooked stone staircase at the foot of which was a heavy door. This she opened with a key, careless of the noise she made, and found herself out in the open air, under the stars, on a gravel walk, with a broad lawn stretched before her. She stood a moment, breathing deeply in pure enjoyment of the air, then put up both hands to rearrange a little cloth cap she wore which was slipping from off her abundant hair. Then she threw up her arms and stretched every limb in the joy of perfect freedom from restraint; and then with strong bounds she cleared the grassy space, dashed down a rocky step, and found herself a substance amongst the shadows out in the murmuring woods.

When she returned she was making less vigorous demonstrations of superabundant strength and vitality, but still her step was swift, firm, and elastic; and she was running up the grand staircase from the hall when she saw that the door at the top, leading into the suite of rooms occupied by Lord Dawne when he was at the castle, was wide open, showing the room beyond, brilliantly lighted.

She would have to pass that open door or stay downstairs

till it was shut; but the latter she did not feel inclined to do, so, with scarcely a pause to nerve herself for what might happen, she continued rapidly to ascend the stairs.

As she expected, when she reached the top, her uncle appeared.

"Oh!" he exclaimed in surprise, seeing Diavolo as he supposed emerging from the darkness. "I thought it was Angelica's step. I fancied I heard her go down some time ago, and I have been waiting for her. She complained of not feeling well this evening, and I thought she might possibly want something. Come in." He had turned to lead the way as he spoke. "By-the-bye," he broke off, "what are you doing here, you young rascal?"

Angelica, overcome by one of her mischievous impulses, and grinning broadly, boldly followed her uncle into the room.

"I had forgotten for a moment that you ought not to be here, it is so natural to find you marauding about the place at night;" he pursued, bending down to adjust the wick of a lamp that was flaring as he spoke. Angelica sat down, and coolly waited for him to turn and look at her, which he did when he had done with the lamp, meeting her dark eyes unsuspectingly at first, then with fixed attention inquiringly.

"Angelica!" he exclaimed. "How can you!"

"I have been out in the woods," she rejoined with her accustomed candour. "The suffocating fumes of incense and orthodoxy overpowered me in the chapel, and I was miserable besides—soul-sick. But the fresh air is a powerful tonic, and it has exhilarated me, the stars have strengthened me, the voices of the night spoke peace to me, and the pleasant creatures, visible and invisible, gave me welcome as one of themselves, and showed me how to attain to their joy in life." She bent forward to brush some fresh earth from the leg of her trousers. "But you would have me forego these innocent, healthy-minded, invigorating exercises, I suppose, because I am a woman," she pursued. "You would allow Diavolo to disport himself so at will, and approve rather than object, although he is not so strong as I am. And then these clothes, which are decent and convenient for him, besides being a greater protection than any you permit me to wear, you think immodest for me—you mass of prejudice."

Lord Dawne made no reply. He had taken a seat, and remained with his eyes fixed on the floor for some seconds

after she had spoken. There was neither agreement nor dissent in his attitude, however; he was simply reflecting.

"What is it, Angelica?" he said at last, looking her full in the face.

"What is what?" she asked defiantly.

"What is the matter?" he answered. "There is something wrong, I see, and if it is anything that you would like to talk about—I don't pretend to offer you advice, but sometimes when one speaks—you know, however, what a comfort it is to 'talk a thing out,' as you used to call it when you were a little girl." He looked at her and smiled. When she entered the room fresh from the open air a brilliant colour glowed in her cheeks, but now she was pale to her lips, which, perceiving, caused him to rise hastily, and add: "But I am afraid you have tired yourself, and"—glancing at the clock—"it is nearly breakfast time. I'll go and get you something."

After a considerable interval he returned with a tray upon which was a plentiful variety of refreshments, prawns in aspic jelly, cold chicken and tongue, a freshly opened tin of *paté de foie gras*, cake, bread, butter, and champagne.

"I think I've brought everything," he remarked, surveying the tray complacently when he had put it down upon a table beside her.

"You've forgotten the salt," snapped Angelica.

His complacency vanished, and he retired apologetically to remedy the omission.

"Do you remember the night you and Diavolo taught me where to find food in my father's house?" he asked when he returned.

"Yes," Angelica answered with a grin; and then she expanded into further reminiscences of that occasion, by which time she was in such a good humour that she began to feel hungry, and under the stimulating influences of food and champagne she told her uncle the whole story of her intimacy with the Tenor.

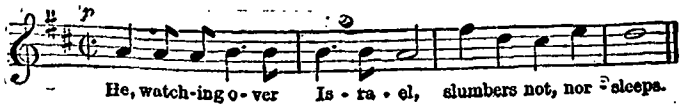
Lord Dawne listened with interest, but almost in silence. The occasion was not one, as it appeared to him, which it would be well to improve. He discussed the matter with her, however, as well as he could without offering her advice or expressing an opinion of her conduct; and, in consequence of this wise forbearance on his part, she found herself the better in every way for the interview.

CHAPTER VII.

ANGELICA awoke unrefreshed after a few hours of light and restless sleep, much broken by dreams. "Dead! dead!" was the first thought in her mind, but it came unaccompanied by any feeling. "Is Israfil really dead—buried—gone from us all forever?" she asked herself in a kind of wonder. It was not at the thought of his death that she was wondering, however, but because the recollection of it did not move her in any way. Reflections which had caused her the sharpest misery only yesterday recurred to her now without affecting her in the least degree—except in that they made her feel herself to be a kind of monster of callousness, coldness, and egotism. The lonely grave, looking deserted already, with the rain-bespattered, mud-bedraggled flowers fading upon it; the man himself as she had known him; his goodness, his kindness, the disinterested affection he had lavished upon her—she dwelt upon these things; she racked her brain to recall them in order to reawaken her grief and remorse, but in vain. Mind and memory responded to the effort, but her own heart she could not touch. The acute stage was over for the moment, and a most distressing numbness, attended by a sense of chilliness and general physical discomfort, had succeeded it. The rims of her eyes were red and the lids still swollen by the tears of the day before; but the state of weeping, with the nervous energy and mental excitement which had been the first consequence of the shock, was a happy one compared with the dry inhuman apathy of this, and she strove to recall it, but only succeeded in adding the old sensation of discontent with everything as it is and nothing is worth while to her already deep depression. She loved order and regularity in a household, but now the very thought of the old accustomed dull routine of life at the castle exasperated her. After her grandfather would come her uncle, and after him in all human probability Diavolo would succeed, and there would be a long succession of solemn servants, each attending to the same occupations which had been carried on by other servants in the same place for hundreds of years; horrible monotony, all tending to nothing! For she saw as in a vision the end of the race to which she belonged. They and their like were doomed, and, with them, the distinguished bearing, the high-bred reserve, the refined simplicity and

dignity of manner which had held them above the common herd, a class apart, until she came, were also doomed. "I am of the day," she said to herself; "the vulgar outcome of a vulgar era, bred so, I suppose, that I may see through others, which is to me the means of self-defence. I see that in this dispute of 'womanly or unwomanly,' the question to be asked is, not 'What is the pursuit?' but 'What are the proceeds?' No social law-maker ever *said* 'Catch me letting a woman into anything that pays!' It was left for me to translate the principle into the vernacular."

She breakfasted upstairs so that she might not have to talk, but went down immediately afterward in order to find somebody to speak to, so rapid were the alternations of her moods. It was not in Angelica's nature to conceal anything she had done from her friends for long, and before she had been twenty-four hours at the castle she had taken her Aunt Claudia, and the lady known to them all intimately as "Ideala," into her confidence; but neither of them attempted to improve the occasion. They said even less than her uncle had done, and this reticence perplexed Angelica. She would have liked them to make much of her wickedness, to have reasoned with her, lectured her, and incited her to argue. She did not perceive, as they did, that she was one of those who must work out their own salvation in fear and trembling, and she was angry with them because they continued their ordinary avocations as if nothing had happened when everything had gone so wrong with her.

The weary day dragged its slow length along. A walk about the grounds, luncheon, a long drive, calling at Ilverthorpe on the way back for letters; afternoon tea with her grandfather in the oriel room, and afterward the accustomed wait with bowed head for the chime, which floated up at last from afar, distinct, solemn, slow, and weary like the voice of one who vainly repeats a blessed truth to ears that will not hear:

Her grandfather raised his velvet cap, and held it above his bald head while he repeated the words aloud, after which he

muttered a prayer for the restoration of "Holy Church," then rose, and, leaning heavily on his ebony stick, walked from the room with the springless step of age, accompanied by his daughter Claudia and his son, and followed by two deer hounds, old and faithful friends who seldom left him. When the door closed upon this little procession, Angelica found herself alone with her aunt Lady Fulda, to whom she had not spoken since the day before. They were sitting near to each other, Angelica being in the window, from whence she had looked down upon the tree-tops and the distant city while they waited for the chime, the melancholy cadence of which had added something to the chill misery of her mood.

"Do you still believe it?" she asked ironically, and then felt as if she were always asking that question in that tone.

Lady Fulda had also looked about as she listened, but now she left the window, and, taking a seat opposite to Angelica, answered bravely, her face lighting up as she spoke: "I do believe it."

"Then why did He let a man like that die?" Angelica asked defiantly. "Why did He create such a man at all merely to kill him? Wouldn't a commoner creature have done as well?"

"We are not told that any creature is common in His sight," Lady Fulda answered gently. "But suppose they were, would a common creature have produced the same effect upon you?"

"Do you mean to say you think he was created to please me——"

"Oh, no, not that," Lady Fulda hastily interposed, and Angelica, perceiving that she had at last found somebody who would kindly improve the occasion, turned round from the window, and settled herself for a fray. "And I don't mean," Lady Fulda pursued, "I dare not presume to question; but still—oh, I must say it! Your heart has been very hard. Would anything but death have touched you so? Had not every possible influence been vainly tried before that to soften you?"

Angelica smiled disagreeably. "You are insinuating that he died for me, to save my soul," she politely suggested.

Her aunt took no notice of the sneer. "Oh, not for you alone," she answered earnestly; "but for all the hundreds upon whom you, in your position, and with your attractions, will bring the new power of your goodness to bear. You can

not think, with all your scepticism, that such a man has lived and died for nothing. You must have some knowledge or idea of the consequences of such a life in such a world, of the influence for good of a great talent employed as his was, the one as an example and the other as a power to inspire and control."

Angelica did not attempt to answer this, and there was a pause; then she began again; "I did grasp something of what you mean, I saw for a moment the beauty of holiness, and the joy of it continued with me for a little. Then I went to tell Israfil. I was determined to be true, and I should have been true had I not lost him; but now my heart is harder than ever, and I shall be worse than I was before."

"Oh, no!" her aunt exclaimed, "you are deceiving yourself. If you had found him there that day, your good resolutions would only have lasted until you had bound him to you —enslaved him; and then, although you would have carefully avoided breaking the letter of the law, you would have broken the spirit; you would have tried to fascinate him, and bring him down to your own level; you would have made him loathe himself, and then you would have mocked him."

"Like the evil-minded heroine of a railway novel!" Angelica began, then added doggedly: "You wrong me, Aunt Fulda. There is no one whose respect I valued more. There is nothing in right or reason I would not have done to win it—that is to say, if there had been anything I could have done. But I do not think now that there was." This last depressing thought brought about another of those rapid revulsions of feeling to which she had been subject during these latter days, and she broke off for a moment, then burst out afresh to just the opposite effect: "I do not know, though. I am not sure of anything. Probably you are right, and I deceived myself. I inherit bad principles from my ancestors, and it may be that I can no more get rid of them than I could get rid of the gout or any other hereditary malady, by simply resolving to cure myself. It is different with you. You were born good. I was born bad, and delight in my wickedness."

"Angelica!" her aunt remonstrated, "do not talk in that reckless way."

"Well, I exaggerate," Angelica allowed, veering again, as the wind does in squally weather before it sets steadily from a single quarter. "But what have I done after all that you should take me to task so seriously? Wrong, certainly; but still I have not broken a single commandment."

"Not one of the Decalogue, perhaps; but you have sinned against the whole spirit of uprightness. Has it never occurred to you that you may keep the ten commandments strictly, and yet be a most objectionable person? You might smoke, drink, listen at doors, repeat private conversations, open other people's letters, pry amongst their papers, be vulgar and offensive in conversation, and indecent in dress—altogether detestable, if your code of morality were confined to the ten commandments. But why will you talk like this, Angelica? Why will you be so defiant, when your heart is breaking, as I know it is?"

Angelica hid her face in her hands with one dry sob that made her whole frame quiver.

"Oh, do not be so hard!" the other woman implored. "Listen to your own heart, listen to all that is best in yourself; you have good impulses enough, I know you have; and you have been called to the Higher Life more than once, but you would not hear."

"Yes"—thoughtfully—"but it is no use—no help. I never profit by experiences because I don't object to things while they are happening. It is only afterward, when all the excitement is over and I have had time to reflect, that I become dissatisfied." And she threw herself back in her easy-chair, crossed one leg over the other so as to display a fair amount of slender foot and silk-clocked stocking, as it is the elegant fashion of the day to do; clasped her hands behind her head, and fixed her eyes on the ceiling, being evidently determined to let the subject drop.

Lady Fulda compressed her lips. She was baffled, and she was perplexed. A quarter rang from the city clocks. "Do you know," she began again, "I have a fancy—many people have—that a time comes to us all—an hour when we are called upon to choose between good and evil. It is a quarter since we heard the chime——"

"Only a quarter!" Angelica ejaculated. "It seems an age!"

"But suppose this is your hour," Lady Fulda patiently pursued. "One precious quarter of it has gone already, and still you harden your heart. You are asked to choose now, you are called to the Higher Life; you must know that you are being called—specially—this moment. And what if it should be for the last time? What if, after this, you are deprived of the power to choose, and forced by that which is evil in you to wander away from all that is good and pure and pleasant

into the turmoil and trouble, the falseness, the illusion, and the maddening unrest of the other life? You know it all. You can imagine what it would be when that last loophole of escape, upon which we all rely—perhaps unconsciously—was closed, when you knew you never could return; when you came to be shut out from hope, a prey to remorse, a tired victim compelled to pursue excitement, and always to pursue it, descending all the time, and finding it escape you more and more till at last even that hateful resource was lost to you, and you found yourself at the end of the road to perdition, a worn out woman, face to face with despair!"

Angelica slowly unclasped her hands from behind her head, let her chin sink on her chest, and looked up from under her eyebrows at her aunt. Her eyes were bright, but otherwise her face was as still as a statue's, and what she thought or felt it was impossible to say. "It is idle to talk of choice," she answered coldly. "I *had* chosen—honestly. I told you; you see what has come of it!"

"Forgive me," said Lady Fulda, "but you had not chosen *honestly*. You had not chosen the better life—to lead it for its own sake, but for his. You wanted to bring yourself nearer to him, and you would have made goodness a means to that end if you could. But you see it was not the right way, and it has not succeeded."

Angelica sat up, and the dull look left her face. She seemed interested. "You see through all my turpitude," she observed, affecting to smile, although in truth she was more moved than her pride would allow her to show.

Her aunt sighed, seeing no sign of softening. She feared it was labour lost, but still she felt impelled to try once more before she renounced the effort. She was nervous about it, however, being naturally diffident, and hesitated, trying to collect her thoughts; and in the interval the evening shadows deepened, the half hour chimed from the city clocks, and then she spoke. "Just think," she said sadly—"Just think what it will be when you have gone from here this evening—if you carry out your determination and return after dinner; just think what it will be when you find yourself alone again in that great house with the night before you; and your aching heart, and your bitter thoughts, and the remorse which gnaws without ceasing, for companions; and not one night of it only but all the years to come, and every phase of it; from the sharp pain of this moment to the dull discontent in which it ends,

and from which nothing on earth will rouse you; think of yourself then without comfort and without hope." Angelica changed her position uneasily. "You still hesitate," Lady Fulda continued; "you are loath to commit yourself; you would rather not choose; you prefer to believe yourself a puppet at the mercy of a capricious demon who moves you this way and that as the idle fancy seizes him. But you are no puppet. You have the right of choice; you *must* choose; and, having chosen, if you look up, the Power Divine will be extended to you to support you, or—but either way your choice will at once become a force for good or evil."

She ended abruptly, and then there was another long pause.

Angelica's mind was alive to everything—to the rustle of summer foliage far below; to the beauty of the woman before her, to the power of her presence, to the absolute integrity which was so impressive in all she said, to her high-bred simplicity, to the grace of her attitude at that moment as she sat with an elbow on the arm of her chair, covering her eyes with one white hand; to the tearless turmoil in her own breast, the sense of suffering not to be relieved, the hopeless ache. Was there any way of escape from herself? Her conscience whispered one. But was there only one? The struggle of the last few days had recommenced; was it to go on like this forever and ever, over and over again? What a prospect! And, oh! to be able to end it! somehow! anyhow! Oh, for the courage to choose! but she must choose, she knew that; Aunt Fulda was right, her hour had come. The momentous question had been asked, and it must be answered once for all. If she should refuse to take the hand held out to help her now, where would she drift to eventually? Should she end by consorting with people like—and she thought of an odious woman; or come to be talked of at clubs, named lightly by low men—and she thought of some specimens of that class. But why should she arrive at any decision? Why should she feel compelled to adopt a settled plan of action? Why could she not go on as she had done hitherto? Was there really no standing still? Were people really rising or sinking always, doing good or evil? Why, no, for what harm had she done? Quick, answering to the question with a pang, the rush of recollection caught her, and again the vow, made, and forgotten for the moment, as soon as made, burned in her heart: "Israfil! Israfil! only forgive me, and I will be true."

She did not wait to think again. The mere repetition was a

renewal of her vow, and in the act she had unconsciously decided.

Slipping from her chair to the ground, she laid her head on Lady Fulda's lap.

"I wish I could be sure of myself," she said, sighing deeply. "You must help me, Aunt Fulda."

"Now the dear Lord help you," was the soft reply.

And almost at the same moment, the city clocks began to strike, and they both raised their heads involuntarily, waiting for the chime.

It rang at last with a new significance for Angelica. The hour was over which had been her hour; a chapter of her life had closed with it forever; and when she looked up then, she found herself in another world, wherein she would walk henceforth with other eyes to better purpose.

CHAPTER VIII.

ANGELICA drove back to Ilverthorpe alone directly after dinner, and went straight to bed. She slept from ten o'clock that night till the next morning, and awoke to the consciousness that the light of day was garish, that she herself was an insignificant trifle on the face of the earth, and that everything was unsatisfactory.

"Now, had I been the heroine of a story," she said to herself, "it would have been left to the reader's imagination to suppose that I remained forever in the state of blissful exaltation up to which Aunt Fulda wound me by her eloquence yesterday. Here I am already, however—with my intentions still set fair, I believe—but in spirit, oh, so flat! a siphon of soda-water from which the gas has escaped. Well, I suppose it must be recharged, that is all. Oh, dear! I *am* so tired. Just five minutes more, Angelica dear, take five minutes more!" She closed her eyes. "I'm glad I'm the mistress and not the maid—am I though? Poor Elizabeth! It spoils my comfort just to think of her always obliged to be up and dressed—with a racking headache, perhaps, hardly able to rise, but forced to drag herself up somehow nevertheless to wait upon worthless selfish me. Live for others"—Here, however, thought halted, grew confused, ceased altogether for an imperceptible interval, and was then succeeded by vivid

dreams. She fancied that she had wavered in her new resolutions, and gone back to her old idea. If the conditions of life were different, *she* would be different, in spirit and in truth, instead of only in outward seeming as now appeared to be the case. She was doing no good in the world; her days were steeped in idleness; her life was being wasted. Surely it would be a creditable thing for her to take her violin, and make it what it was intended to be, a delight to thousands. Such genius as hers was never meant for the benefit of a little circle only, but for the world at large, and all she wanted was to fulfil the end and object of her being by going to work. She said so to Mr. Kilroy, and he made no objection, which surprised her, for always hitherto he had expressed himself strongly on the subject even to the extent of losing his temper on one occasion. Now, however, he heard her in silence, with his eyes fixed on the floor, and when she had said her say he uttered not a word, but just rose from his seat with a deep sigh—almost a groan—and a look of weariness and perplexity in his eyes that smote her to the heart, and slowly left the room.

"I make his life a burden to him," she said to herself. "I can do nothing right. I wish I was dead. I do." And then she followed him to the library.

He was sitting at his writing table with his arms folded upon it, and his face bowed down and hidden on them, and he did not move when she entered.

The deep dejection of his attitude frightened her. She hastened to him, knelt down beside him, and putting her arms round his neck drew him toward her; and then he looked at her, trying to smile, but a more miserable face she had never beheld.

"O Daddy, Daddy," she cried remorsefully; "I didn't mean to vex you. I'll never play in public as long as I live—there! I promise you."

"I don't wish you to make rash promises," he answered hoarsely. "But if you could care for me a little——"

"Daddy—*dear*—I do care for you. I do, indeed," she protested. "I like to know you are here. I like to be able to come to you when—whenever I like. I cannot do without you. If anything happened to you——"

The shock of such a dreadful possibility awoke her. She was less refreshed than she had been when she first opened her eyes that morning, but she sprang out of bed in an instant.

The blinds were up and the windows open as usual; the sun had spun round to the south, and now streamed hotly in, making her feel belated.

"Elizabeth!" she called, then went to the bell and rang it, standing a moment when she had done so, and looking down as if to consider the blurred reflection of her bare white feet on the polished floor; but only for an instant, for the paramount feeling that possessed her was one of extreme haste. The painful impression of that dream was still vividly present with her, and she wanted to do *something*, but what precisely she did not wait to ask herself. As soon as she was dressed, one duty after another presented itself as usual, and, equally as usual with her in her own house, was carefully performed, so that she was fully occupied until lunch time, but after lunch she ordered the carriage, and drove into Morningquest to do some shopping for the household. This task accomplished, she intended to return, but as she passed the station the recollection of the dream, of her husband's bowed head, of the utter misery in his face when he looked up at her, of the pain in his voice when he spoke, and the effort he made in his kindly way to control it, so that he might not hurt her with an implied reproach when he said, "If you could care for me a little——" Dear Daddy! always so tender for her! always so kindly forbearing! What o'clock was it? The London express would go out in five minutes. It was the train he had gone by himself last time. How could she let him go alone? Stop at the station, write a line to Elizabeth—"Please pack up my things, and follow me to town immediately." Get me a ticket, quick! Here is the train. In. Off. Thank Heaven!

Angelica threw herself back in the centre seat of the compartment, and closed her eyes. The hurry and excitement of action suited her; her lips were smiling, and her cheeks were flushed. There was a young man seated opposite to her who stared so persistently that at last she became aware of his admiring gaze and immediately despised him, although why she should despise him for admiring her she could not have told. When he had left the carriage, a charming-looking old Quaker lady, who was then the only other passenger, addressed Angelica in the quaint grammar of her sect. "Art thee travelling alone, dear child?"

"Yes," Angelica answered, with the affable smile and intonation for which the Heavenly Twins were noted.

"Doubtless there are plenty of friends to meet thee at thy

journey's end," the lady suggested, responding sympathetically to Angelica's pleasantness.

"Plenty," said Angelica—"not to mention my husband." When she had said it she felt proud for the first time since her marriage because she had a husband.

"Ah!" the lady ejaculated, somewhat sadly. "Well," she added, betraying her thought, "in these sad days the sooner a young girl has the strong arm of a good man to protect her the better." Then she folded her hands and turned her placid face to the window.

Angelica looked at her for a little, wondering at the delicate pink and white of her withered cheek, and becoming aware of a tune at the same time set to the words *A good man! A good man!* by the thundering throbbing crank as they sped along. Daddy was a good man—*suppose she lost him?* Nobody belonged to her as he did—*suppose she lost him?* There was nobody else in the world to whom she could go by right as she was going to him, nobody else in whom she had such perfect confidence, nobody on whose devotion to herself she could rely as she did on his; she was all the world to him. *A good man! A good man! Suppose—suppose she lost him?*

The sudden dread gripped her heart painfully. It was not death she feared, but that worse loss, a change in his affection. He was a simple, upright, honourable man—what would he say if he knew? But need he ever know? The question was answered as soon as asked, for Angelica felt in her heart that she could bear to lose him and live alone better than be beside him with that invisible barrier of a deception always between them to keep them apart. It was a need of her nature to be known for what she was exactly to those with whom she lived.

The train drew up at the terminus, and the moment she moved she was again conscious of that terrible feeling of haste which had beset her more or less the whole day long.

"No one to meet thee?" the Quaker lady said.

"No, I am not expected," Angelica answered, with her hand on the handle of the door. "I am a bad wife in a state of repentance, going to give a good husband an unpleasant surprise." She sprang from the carriage, hastened across the platform, and got into a hansom, telling the man to drive "quick! quick!"

On arriving at the house she entered unannounced, after some little opposition from a new manservant who did not know her by sight, and was evidently inclined to believe her to be

an impostor bent on pillage. This check on the threshold caused her to feel deeply humiliated.

Her husband happened to be crossing the hall at the time, but he went on without noticing the arrival at the door, and she followed him to his study. Unconscious of her presence, he passed into the room before her with a heavy step, and as she noted this it seemed to her that she saw him now for the first time as he really was—of good figure and quiet undemonstrative manners; faultlessly dressed; distinguished in appearance, upon the whole, if not actually handsome; a man of position and means, accustomed to social consideration as was evident by his bearing; and not old as she was wont to think him—what difference did twenty years make at *their* respective ages? No, not old, but—unhappy, and lonely, for if she did not care to be with him who would? Her heart smote her, and she stepped forward impetuously, anxious above everything to make amends.

"Daddy!" she gasped, grasping his arm.

Startled, Mr. Kilroy turned round, and looked down into her face incredulously.

"Is it you—Angelica?" he faltered. "Is anything the matter, dear?" Then suddenly his whole being changed. A glad light came into his eyes, making him look years younger, and he was about to take her in his arms, but she coldly repulsed him, acting on one of two impulses, the other being to respond, to cling close to him, to say something loving.

"There is nothing the matter," she began. "I thought I should like to come back to you—at least"—recollecting herself—"that isn't true. But I do wish I had never separated myself from you in any way. I do wish I had been different." And she threw herself into a low, easy, leather-lined armchair, and leant back, looking up to him with appealing eyes.

Mr. Kilroy's pride and affection made him nicely observant of any change in Angelica, but still he was at a loss to understand this new freak, and her manner alarmed him.

"I am afraid you are not well," he said anxiously.

She sat up restlessly, then threw herself back in the chair once more, and lay there with her chin on her chest, in an utterly dejected attitude, not looking up even when she spoke. "Oh, I am well, thank you," she said, "quite well."

"Then something has annoyed you," he went on kindly. "Tell me what it is, dear child. I am the proper person to come to when things go wrong, you know. So tell me all

about it. I—I——" he hesitated. She so often snubbed any demonstration of affection that he shrank from expressing what he felt, but another look at her convinced him that there was little chance of a rebuff to-day. He remained at a safe distance, however, taking a chair that stood beside an oval table near to which he happened to be standing.

Newspapers and magazines were piled up on the table, and these he pushed aside, making room for his right forearm to rest on the cool mahogany, on the polished surface of which he kept up a continual nervous telick-telick with the ends of his finger nails as he spoke. "If you do not come to me for everything you want, to whom will you go?" he inquired, lamely if pleasantly, being perturbed by the effort he was making to conceal his uneasiness and assume a cheerful demeanour both at once. "And there is nothing I would not do for you, as you know, I am sure." He tapped a few times on the table. "In fact, I should be only too glad if you would give me the opportunity"—tap, tap, tap—"a little oftener, you know"—tap, tap, tap. "What I want to say is, I should like you to consult me and, eh, to ask me, and all that sort of thing, if you want anything"—advice he had been going to add, but modestly changed the word—"money, for instance." And now his countenance cleared. He thought he had accidentally discovered the difficulty. "I expect you have been running into debt, eh?" He spoke quite playfully, so greatly was he relieved to think it was only that; "and you have been thinking of me as a sort of stern parent, eh? who would storm and all that sort of thing. But, my dear child, you mustn't do that. You should never forget 'with all my worldly goods I thee endow.' I assure you, ever since I uttered those words, I have felt that I held the property in trust for you and——" he had been going to add our children, but sighed instead. "I have, I know, remonstrated with you when I thought you unduly extravagant. I could not conscientiously countenance undue extravagance in so young a wife; but still I hope you have never had to complain of any want of liberality on my part in—in anything. In fact, what is the good of money to me if you do not care to spend it? Come, now, how much is it this time? Just tell me and have done with it, and then we will go somewhere, or make plans, and 'have a good time,' as the Americans call it. I have a better box than usual for you at the opera this year—I think I told you. And I never lend it to anybody. I like to keep it

empty for you in case you care to go at any time. And I have season tickets, see"—he got up and rummaged in a drawer until he found them—"for everything, I almost think. I go sometimes myself just to see what is going on, you know, and if it is the sort of thing you would like, so as to know what to take you to when you come. And I accept all the nice invitations for you, conditionally, of course. I say if you are in town at the time, and I hope you may be (which is true enough always), you will be happy to go, or words to that effect. So you see there is plenty for you to do at any time in the way of amusement. I am always making arrangements, it is like getting ready to welcome you. When I am answering invitations or doing the theatres I feel quite as if I expected you. It is childish, perhaps, but it makes something to look forward to, and when I am busy preparing for you, somehow the days do not seem so blank."

Angelica felt something rise in her throat, but she neither spoke nor moved.

"Or we might go to Paris," he proceeded tentatively. "Shall we? I could pair with someone till the end of the session. We might go anywhere, in fact, and I should enjoy a holiday if—if you would accompany me." He looked at her with a smile, but the intermittent telick, telick, telick of his nervous drumming on the table told that he was far from feeling all the confidence he assumed. For in truth Angelica's attitude alarmed him more and more. On other occasions, when he had tried to be more than usually kind and indulgent, she had always called him a nice old thing or made some such affable if somewhat patronizing acknowledgment, even when she was out of temper; but now, finding that he was waiting for an answer, she just looked up at him once, then fixed her eyes on the ground again, and spoke at last in a voice so hopeless and toneless that he would not have recognized it.

"I think I have only just this moment learnt to appreciate you," she said. "I used to accept all your kind attentions as merely my due, but I know now how little I deserve them, and I wish I could be different. I wish I could repay you. I wish I could undo the past and begin all over again—begin by loving you as a wife should. You are ten thousand times too good for me. Yet I *have* cared for you in a way," she protested; "not a kind way, perhaps, but still I have relied upon you—upon your friendship. I have felt a sense of security in

the certainty of your affection for me—and presumed upon it. O Daddy! why have you let me do as I like?"

Mr. Kilroy's face became rigid, and the fingers with which he had kept up that intermittent tapping on the table turned cold.

"What do you mean, Angelica?" he asked hoarsely. "Are you in earnest? Have you done—anything—or are you only tormenting me? If you are—it is hard, you know. I do care for you; I always have done; and I have never ceased to look forward to a time when you would love me too. God help me if you have come to tell me that that time will never come."

Again that lump rose in Angelica's throat. A horrible form of emotion had seized upon her: "I had better tell you and get it over," she said, speaking in hurried gasps, and sitting up, but not looking at him. "You will care less when you know exactly. You will see then that I am not worth a thought. I am suffering horribly. I want to *shriek*." She tore her jacket open, and threw her hat on the floor. "What a relief. I was suffocating. I don't know where to begin." She looked up at him, then stopped short, frightened by the drawn and haggard look in his face, and tranquillised too, forgetting herself in the effort to think of something to say to relieve him. "But you do know all about it," she added, speaking more naturally than she had done yet. "I told you——"

"Told me *what?*"

"About—about—you thought I was inventing it—that story—about the Tenor and the Boy."

Mr. Kilroy curved his fingers together and held them up over the table for a moment as if he were about to tap upon it again, and it was as if he had asked a question.

"It was all true," Angelica proceeded, "all that I told you. But there was more."

Mr. Kilroy uttered a low exclamation, and hung his head as if in shame. The colour had fled from his face, leaving it ghastly gray for a moment like that of a dead man. Angelica half rose to go to him, fearing he would faint, but he had recovered before she could carry out her intention. She looked at him compassionately. She would have given her life to be able to spare him now, but it was too late, and there was nothing for it but to go on and get it over.

"You remember the picture I had painted—'Music'?" Mr. Kilroy made a gesture of assent. "That was his portrait."

"I always understood it was an ideal singer."

"An *idealized* singer was what I said; but it was not even that, as you would have seen for yourself if you had ever gone to the cathedral. It is a good likeness, nothing more."

"And you had yourself put into a picture with a common tenor, and exhibited to all the world!"

"Yes, and all the world thought it a great condescension. But he did not consent to it, or sit for it. He objected to the picture as strongly as you do. He was not a *common* tenor at all. He was an old and intimate friend of Uncle Dawne's and Dr. Galbraith's. They all—all our people—knew him. He was often at Morne before you came to Ilverthorpe; but I did not know it myself until afterward."

"Afterward?" he questioned.

"I had better go on from where I left off," she replied, her confidence returning. "I told you about the accident on the river, and his finding out who I was, and his contempt for me; and I told you I desired most sincerely to win his respect, and you advised me to go to him and endeavour to do so. Well, I went." She paused, and Mr. Kilroy looked hard at her; his face was flushed now. "And he was dead," she gasped.

Mr. Kilroy seemed bewildered. "I don't—understand," he exclaimed.

"I told you there was more, and that was it—that was all. He was dead," she repeated.

Mr. Kilroy drew a deep breath, and leant back in his chair. "I am ashamed to say I feel relieved," he began, as if speaking to himself; "yet I scarcely know what I expected." He looked down thoughtfully at his own hand as it lay upon the table. He wanted to say something more, but his mind moved slowly, and no words came at first. He was obliged to make a great effort to collect himself, and in the interval he resumed that irregular tapping upon the table. It maddened Angelica, who found herself forced to watch and wait for the recurrence of the sound.

"Let me tell you, though—let me finish the story," she exclaimed, at last unable to bear it any longer; and then she gave him every detail of her doings since last they parted.

Mr. Kilroy let his hand drop on the table, and listened without looking at her. "And that is all?" he said, when she had finished. "I mean—have you really told me all, Angelica?"

She met his eyes fearlessly, and there was something in her face, something innocent, an unsuspicious look of inquiry such

as a child assumes when it waits to be questioned which would have made him ashamed of a degrading doubt had he entertained one.

"You were not—you did not care for him?"

"Oh, yes!" she exclaimed with most perfect and reassuring candour, "I cared for him. Of course I cared for him. Haven't I told you? No one could know such a man and not care for him."

"Thank God!" he said softly, with tremulous lips. "It would have broken my heart if he had not been such a man."

The words brought down upon him one of Angelica's tornado-tempests of unreasonable wrath. "Are you insinuating that my good conduct depended upon his good character?" she demanded. "Are you no better than those hateful French people who have no conception of anything unusual in a woman that does not end in gross impropriety of conduct; and fill their books with nothing else?"

Mr. Kilroy's face flushed. "Such an unworthy suspicion would never have occurred to me in connection with yourself," he said. "At the risk of appearing ungenerous, I must call your attention to the fact that it is you yourself who have been the first to allude to the bare possibility of such a thing. For my own part, if you chose to travel round the world alone with a man, at night or at any other time that suited your convenience, I should be content to know that you were doing so, especially if it amused you, such is my perfect confidence in your integrity, and in the discretion with which you choose your friends."

"I beg your pardon, forgive me!" Angelica humbly ejaculated. "You shame me by a delicacy which I can only respect and admire in you. I cannot imitate it; it is beyond me."

"I owe *you* an apology," he answered. "I should have spoken plainly. It was your feelings—your heart, not your conduct, that I suspected. You have never pretended to love me—to be in love with me, and your Tenor was a younger man, and more attractive."

"Not to me," Angelica hastily and sincerely asseverated.

She did not look up to see the effect of her words upon Mr. Kilroy. Her eyes had been fixed on his feet as she spoke, and now it struck her that they were exceedingly well-shaped feet, and well-booted in the quiet way characteristic of the man. Everything about him was unobtrusive as his own manner, but good as his own heart.

Angelica leant back in her chair, and a long silence ensued, during which she lapsed into her old attitude, lying back in her chair, her hands on the arms, her chin on her chest, her wandering glance upon the ground, so that she did not see that her husband was watching her with eyes that filled as he looked. What was to be the end of this? Should she lose his affection? Would she be turned out of the kind heart that had loved her with all her faults, and cherished her with a patient, enduring, self-denying fondness that was worth more, and had been a greater comfort to her, as she knew now, than all the things together, youth, beauty, rank, wealth, and talents, for which she was envied. If he said to her in his gentle way: "You had better return to Ilverthorpe, and live there," which would mean that he cared for her no longer, should she go? Yes, she would go without a word. She would go and drown herself.

But Mr. Kilroy was far from thinking harsh thoughts of her. On the contrary, he was blaming himself, little as he deserved it, for the circumstances which had brought Angelica to this bitter moment of self-abasement. He was not eloquent either in thought or speech, and with regard to his wife he had always felt more than he could express even to himself, though what he felt did find a certain form of expression, intelligible enough to a loving soul, in his constant care for her, and in the uncomplaining devotion which led him to sacrifice his own wishes to her whims, to absent himself when he perceived that she did not want him, and to suffer her neglect without bitterness, though certainly not without pain. And now he never thought of blaming her. What occurred to him was that this young half-educated girl had been committed to his care, and left by him pretty much to her own devices. He had not done his duty by her; he had not influenced her in any way; he had expected too much from her. It was the old story. Had he not himself seen fifty households wrecked because the husband, when he took a girl, little more than a child in years, and quite a child in mind and experience, from her own family, and the wholesome influences and companionship of father, mother, brothers, sisters, probably left her to go unguided, to form her character as best she could, putting that grave responsibility in her own weak hands as if the mere making a wife of her must make her a mature and sensible woman also? This was what he had done himself, and if Angelica had got into bad hands, and come to grief irreparable, there would have been nobody

to blame but himself for it, especially as he knew she was headstrong, excitable, wild, original, fearless, and with an intellect large out of all proportion for the requirements of the life to which society condemned her; a force which was liable, if otherwise unemployed, to expend itself in outbursts of mischievous energy, although there was not a scrap of vice in her —no, not a scrap, he loyally insisted. For just look how she had come to him and told him! Would a girl who was not honest at heart have done that when she might so easily have deceived him? It was this confidence which touched him more than anything. She had come to him, as she should have done, the first thing, and she had come full of remorse and willing to atone. All this trouble was tending to unite them; it had brought her home; it would prove what is called a blessing in disguise after all, he hoped. His great love inspired him with insight and taught him tact in all his dealings with Angelica; and now it prompted him to do the one wise simple thing that would avail under the circumstances. He went to her, and bending over her, always delicately considerate of her inclinations even in the matter of the least caress, laid a kind hand on her shoulder, uttering at the same time brokenly the very words of her dream that morning: "If you could care for me a little, Angelica."

She looked up, amazed at first, then, understanding, she rose. The distressing tension relaxed in that moment, her heart expanded, her eyes filled with tears and overflowed; she could not command her voice to speak, but she threw herself impetuously into her husband's arms, and kissed him passionately, and clung to him, until she was able to sob out—"Don't let me go again, Daddy, keep me close. I am—I am grateful for the blessing of a good man's love."

END OF BOOK V.

BOOK VI.

THE IMPRESSIONS OF DR. GALBRAITH.

Nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice.
—*Othello*, Act V. Sc. II.

NOTE.—The fact that Dr. Galbraith had not the advantage of knowing Evadne's early history when they first became acquainted adds a certain piquancy to the flavour of his impressions, and the reader, better informed than himself with regard to the antecedents of his "subject," will find it interesting to note both the accuracy of his insight and the curious mistakes which it is possible even for a trained observer like himself to make by the half light of such imperfect knowledge as he was able to collect under the circumstances. His record, which is minute in all important particulars, is specially valuable for the way in which it makes apparent the changes of habit and opinion and the modifications of character that had been brought about in a very short time by the restriction Colonel Colquhoun had imposed upon her. In some respects it is hard to believe that she is the same person. But more interesting still, perhaps, are the glimpses we get of Dr. Galbraith himself in the narrative, throughout which it is easy to decipher the simple earnestness of the man, the cautious professionalism and integrity, the touches of tender sentiment held in check, the dash of egotism, the healthy-minded human nature, the capacity for enjoyment and sorrow, the love of life, and, above all, the perfect unconsciousness with which he shows himself to have been a man of fastidious refinement and exemplary moral strength and delicacy; of the highest possible character; and most lovable in spite of a somewhat irascible temper and manner which were apt to be abrupt at times.

CHAPTER I.

EVADNE puzzled me. As a rule, men of my profession, and more particularly specialists like myself, can class a woman's character and gauge her propensities for good or evil while he is diagnosing her disease if she consult him, or more easily still during half an hour's ordinary conversation if he happens to be alone with her. But even after I had seen Evadne many times, and felt broadly that I knew her salient points as well as such tricks of manner or habitual turns of expression as distinguished her from other ladies, I was puzzled.

We are not sufficiently interested in all the people we meet to care to understand their characters exactly, but a medical man who has not insight enough to do so at will has small chance of success in his profession, and when I found myself puzzled about Evadne it became a point of importance with me to understand her. She was certainly an interesting study, and all the more so because of that initial difficulty—a difficulty, by the way, which I found from the gossip of the place that everybody else was experiencing more or less. For it was evident from the first that whatever her real character might be, she was anything but a nonentity. Before she had been in the neighbourhood a fortnight she had made a distinct impression and was freely discussed, a fact which speaks for itself in two ways: first, her individuality was strongly marked enough to attract immediate attention, and secondly, there was that about her which provoked criticism. Not that the criticism of a community like ours is worth much, consisting as it does of carping mainly, and the kind of carping which reflects much more upon the low level of intelligence that obtains in such neighbourhoods than upon the character of the person criticised, for what the vulgar do not understand they are apt to condemn. Somebody has said that to praise moderately is a sign of mediocrity; and somebody might have added that to denounce decidedly shows deficiency in a multitude of estimable qualities, among which discernment must be specially mentioned—not, however, that there was any question of denouncing here, for Evadne was always more discussed for

what she was not than for what she was. One lady of my acquaintance put part of my own feeling into words when she declared that Evadne *could* be nicer if *she would*, that part of it which first made me suspect that there was something artificial in her attitude towards the world at large, and more especially towards the world of thought and opinion, and that, had she been natural, she would have differed from herself as we knew her in many material respects. Naturalness, however, is a quality upon which too much stress is generally laid. If you are naturally nice it is all very well, but suppose you are naturally nasty? We should be very thankful indeed to think that some of our friends are not natural.

In looking back now, I am inclined to ask why we, Evadne's intimate friends, should always have expected more of her than we did of other people. That certainly was the case, and she disappointed us. We felt that she should have been a representative woman such as the world wants at this period of its progress, making a name for herself and an impression on the age; and it was probably her objection, expressed with quite passionate earnestness, to play a part in which we gathered from many chance indications that she was eminently qualified to have excelled, that constituted the puzzle. Her natural bent was certainly in that direction, but something had changed it; and here in particular the external tormenting difficulty with regard to her occurred with full force. At a very early period of our acquaintance, however, I discovered that her attitude in this respect was not inherent, but deliberately chosen.

"I avoid questions of the day as much as possible," she said on one occasion in answer to some remark of mine on a current topic of conversation. "I do not, as a rule, read anything on such subjects, and if people begin to discuss them in my presence I fly if I can."

"I should have thought that all such questions would have interested you deeply," I observed.

"They seem to possess a quite fatal fascination for people who allow themselves to be interested," she answered evasively, and in a tone which forbade further discussion of the subject.

But it was the evasion which enlightened me. She would not have been afraid of the "fatal fascination" if she had never felt it herself, and it was therefore evident that her objection was not the outcome of ignorant prejudice, but of knowledge and set purpose. It was the attitude of a burnt child.

The impression she made upon the neighbourhood was curious in one way—it was so very mixed. In the adverse part of the mixture, however, a good deal of personal pique was apparent, and one thing was always obvious: people liked her as much as she would let them. She even might have been popular had she chosen, but popularity comes of condescending to the level of the average, and Evadne was exclusive. She was *une vraie petite grande dame* at heart as well as in appearance, and would associate with none but her equals; and out of those again she was fastidious in the selection of her friends. To servants, people who knew their proper place, and retainers generally, with legitimate claims to her consideration, she was all kindly courtesy, and they were devoted to her; but she met the aspiring parvenu, seeking her acquaintance on false pretences of equality, with that disdainful civility which is more exasperating than positive rudeness because a lady is only rude to her equals.

And hence most of the animadversion.

But her manner was perfectly consistent. Her coldness or cordiality to mere acquaintances only varied of necessity according to her position and responsibilities. In her own house, where the onus of entertaining fell upon her, she was charming to everybody to-day, neglecting none, and giving an equally flattering share of her attention to each; but if she met the same people at somebody else's place to-morrow, when she was off duty, as it were, she certainly showed no more interest than she felt in them. I do not believe, however, that she ever committed a breach of good manners in her life. When she spoke to you she did so with the most perfect manner, giving you her whole attention for the moment, and never letting her eyes wander, as underbred people so often do, especially in the act of shaking hands. Fairly considered, her attitude in society was distinguished by an equable politeness, in which, however, there was no heart, and that was what the world missed. She did not care for society, and society demands your heart, having none of its own. She certainly did her duty in that state of life, but without any affectation of delight in it. She went to all the local entertainments as custom required, and suffered from suspended animation under the influence of the deadly dulness which prevailed at most of them, but in that she was not peculiar, and she could conceal her boredom more successfully than almost anybody else I ever knew, and did so heroically.

In her religion too she was quite conventional. Like most people in these days, she was a good Churchwoman without being in any sense a Christian. She did not love her neighbour as herself, or profess to; but she went to church regularly and made all the responses, pleasing the clergy, and deriving some solace herself from the occupation—at least she always said the services were soothing. She was genuinely shocked by a sign of irreverence, and would sing the most jingling nonsense as a hymn with perfect gravity and without perceiving that there was any flaw in it. In these matters she showed no originality at all. She would repeat "my duty towards my neighbour is to love him as myself, and to do to all men as I would that they should do unto me" fervently, and come out and cut Mrs. Chrimes to the quick just afterward because she had the misfortune to be a tanner's wife and nobody's daughter in particular. It was what she had been taught. Any one of her set would have said "my duty to my neighbour" without a doubt of their own sincerity, and given Mrs. Chrimes the cold shoulder too; the inconsistency is customary, and in this particular Evadne was as much a creature of custom as the rest.

It was my fate to take Evadne in to dinner on the first occasion of our meeting. I did not hear her name when I was presented, and had no idea who she was, but I was struck by her appearance. Her figure was fragile to a fault; and she was evidently delicate at that time, not having fully recovered, as I was afterwards told, from a severe attack of Maltese fever; but her complexion was not unhealthy. Her features were refined and exquisitely feminine. She looked about twenty, and her face in repose would have been expressionless but for the slight changes about the mouth which showed that the mind was working within. Her long eyes seemed narrow from a trick she had of holding them half shut. They were slow-glancing and steadfast, and all her movements struck one at first as being languid, but that impression wore off after a time, and then it became apparent that they were merely rather more deliberate than is usual with a girl.

She answered my first remarks somewhat shortly; but certainly such observations as one finds to make to a strange lady while taking her from the drawing room to the dining room and arranging her chair at table are not usually calculated to inspire brilliant responses. She had the habit of society to perfection and was essentially self-possessed, but I fancied she was shy. Coldness is often a cover for extreme shyness in

women of her station, and I did my best to thaw her; but the soup and fish had been removed and we had arrived at the last *entrée* before I made a remark that roused her in the least. I forget what I said exactly, but it was some stupid commonplace about the difficulties of the political situation at the moment.

"I hate politics," she then observed. "Business is a disagreeable thing, whether it be the business of the nation or of the shop. I hear women say that they are obliged to interfere just now in all that concerns themselves because men have cheated and imposed upon them to a quite unbearable extent. But they will do no good by it. Their position is perfectly hopeless. And the mere trade of governing is a coarse pursuit, and therefore most objectionable for us." She drew in her breath and tightened her lips. "But for myself," she added, "what I object to mainly is the thought. Why are they trying to make us think? The great difficulty is not to think. There are plenty of men to think for us, and while they are thinking we can be feeling. I, for one, have no joy in eventful living. Feeling is life, not thought. You need not be afraid to give us the suffrage," she broke off, with the first glimpse of a smile I had seen on her lips. "After the excitement of conquering your opposition to it was over we should all be content, and not one woman in a hundred would trouble herself to vote."

"I believe women are more public spirited than that," I answered. "They are toiling everywhere now for the furtherance of all good works, and they come forward courageously whenever necessity compels them to take such an extreme and uncongenial course. In times of war——"

She had been leaning back in her chair in a somewhat languid attitude, but now suddenly she straightened herself, her face flushed crimson, and I stopped short. Something in the word "War" either hurt or excited her. Her long eyes opened on me wide and bright for the first time, and flashed a look into mine more stirring than the wine that bubbled in the glass between my fingers.

"She is beautiful!" I said to myself; but up to that moment I had not suspected it.

"War!" she exclaimed, speaking under her breath, but incisively. "Do not let us talk about it! War is the dirty work of a nation; it is one of the indecencies of life, and should never be mentioned!"

She looked straight into my face for a moment with eyes wide open and lips compressed when she had finished speaking, and then took her *menu* in her left hand, and began to study it with great apparent attention.

Having discovered that she thought politics a coarse, contaminating business, and war the dirty work of a nation, I felt curious to know her views on literature and art.

"I have just been reading a book that might interest you," I began; "it strikes me as being so true to life."

"I think I should be inclined to avoid it, then," she answered, "for I always find that 'true to life' in a book means something revolting."

"Unfortunately, yes, it often does," I agreed. "But still we ought to know. If we refused to study the bad side of life, no evil would ever be remedied."

"Do you think any good is ever done?" she asked.

"I am afraid you are a pessimist," I rejoined.

"But do you really like books that are true to life yourself?" she proceeded. "Don't you think we see enough of life without reading about it? For my own part I am grateful to anyone who has the power to take me out of this world and make me feel something—realise something—beyond. The dash of the supernatural, for instance, in 'John Inglesant,' 'Mr. Isaacs,' 'The Wizard's Son,' and 'The Little Pilgrim' has the effect of rest upon my mind, and gives me greater pleasure than the most perfect picture of real life ever presented. In fact, my ideal of perfect bliss in these days is to know nothing and believe in ghosts."

This also was a comprehensive opinion, and I felt no further inclination to name the book to which I had alluded. But now that she had begun to respond I should have been well content to continue the conversation. There was something so unusual in most of her opinions that I wanted to hear more, although I confess that what she said interested me less than she herself did. Before I could touch on another topic, however, the ladies left the table.

A big blond man, middle-aged, bald, bland, and with a heavy moustache, had been sitting opposite to us during dinner, and had attracted my attention by the way he looked at my partner from time to time. It was a difficult look to describe, because there was neither admiration nor interest in it, approval nor disapproval; he might have looked at a block of wood in exactly the same way, and it could hardly have been

less responsive. Once, however, their eyes did meet, and then the glance became one of friendly recognition on both sides; but even after that he still continued to look in the same queer way, and it was this fact that struck me as peculiar.

When the ladies had gone I happened to find myself beside this gentleman, and asked him if he could tell me who it was I had taken in to dinner.

"Well, she is supposed to be my wife," he answered deliberately; "and I am Colonel Colquhoun."

He spoke with a decidedly Irish accent of the educated sort, and seemed to think that I should know all about him when he mentioned his name, but I had never heard of the fellow before. I rightly conjectured, however, that he was the new man who had come to command the Depôt at Morningquest while I had been abroad for my holiday.

CHAPTER II.

FIRST impressions are very precious for many reasons. They have a charm of their own to begin with, and it is interesting to recall them; and salutary, also, if not sedative. Collect a few, and you will soon see clearly the particular kind of ass you are by the mistakes you have made in consequence of having confided in them. When I first met Evadne I was still young enough, in the opprobrious sense of the word, to suppose that I should find her mentally, when I met her again, just where she was when she left me after our little chat at the dinner-table; and I went to pay my duty call upon her under that most erroneous impression. I intended to resume our interrupted conversation, and never doubted but that I should find her willing to gratify my interest in her peculiar views. It was a mistake, however, which anybody, whose delight in his own pursuits is continuous, might make, and one into which the cleverest man is prone to fall when the object is a woman.

I called on Evadne the day after the dinner. She was alone, and rising from a seat beside a small work-table as I entered, advanced a step, and held out a nerveless hand to me. She was not looking well. Her skin was white and opaque, her eyes dull, her lips pale, and her apparent age ten years more than I had given her on the previous evening. She was a lamplight beauty, I supposed. But her dress satisfied. It

was a long indoor gown which indicated without indelicacy the natural lines of her slender figure, and she was innocent of the shocking vulgarity of the small waist, a common enough deformity at that time, although now, it is said, affected by third rate actresses and women of indifferent character only. The waist is an infallible index to the moral worth of a woman; very little of the latter survives the pressure of a tightened corset.

"Will you sit there?" Evadne said, indicating an easy chair and subsiding into her own again as she spoke. "Colonel Colquhoun is not at home," she added, "but I hope he will return in time to see you. He will be sorry if he does not."

It was quite the proper thing to say, and her manner was all that it ought to have been, yet somehow the effect was not encouraging. Had I been inclined to presume I should have felt myself put in my place, but, being void of reproach, my mind was free to take notes, and I decided off-hand that Evadne was a society woman of unexceptionable form, but ordinary, and my nascent interest was nowhere. My visit lasted about a quarter of an hour, during which time she gave me back commonplace for commonplace punctually, doing damage to her gown with a pin she held in her left hand the while, and only raising her eyes to mine for an instant at a time. Nothing could have been easier, colder, thinner, more uninspiring than the fluent periods with which she favoured me, and nothing more stultifying to my own brain. If it had not been for that pin my wits must have wandered. As it was, however, she inadvertently forced me to concentrate my attention upon the pin, with fears for her femoral artery, by apparently sticking it into herself in a reckless way whenever there was a pause, and each emphatic little dig startled my imagination into lively activity and kept me awake.

But, altogether, the visit was disappointing, and I left her under the impression that the glimpse of mind I had had the night before was delusive, a mere transient flash of intelligence caused by some swift current of emotion due to external influences of which I was unaware. Love, or an effervescent wine, will kindle some such spark in the dullest. But there was nothing in Evadne's manner indicative of the former influence; and as to the latter, the only use she ever made of a wineglass was to put her gloves in it.

As I gathered up the reins to drive my dogcart home that afternoon I was conscious of an impression on my mind as of

a yawn. But I was relieved to have the visit over—and done with, as I at first believed it to be; but it was not done with, for during the drive a thought occurred to me with chastening rather than cheering effect, a thought which proves that my opinion of Evadne's capacity had begun to be mixed even at that early period of our acquaintance. I acknowledged to myself that one of us had been flat that day, and had infected the other; but which was the original flat one? Some minds are like caves of stalactite and stalagmite, rich in treasures of beauty, the existence of which you may never suspect because you bring no light yourself to dispel the darkness that conceals them.

CHAPTER III.

THE next time I saw Evadne it was at her own house also, and it was only a few days after my first visit. I was driving past, but encountered Colonel Colquhoun at the gate, and pulled up for politeness' sake, as I had not seen him when I called. He was returning from barracks in a jovial mood, and made such a point of my going in that I felt obliged to. We found Evadne alone in the drawing room, and I noticed to my surprise that she was extremely nervous. Her manner was self-possessed, but her hands betrayed her. She fidgeted with her rings or her buttons or her fingers incessantly, and certainly was relieved when I rose to go.

The little she said, however, impressed me, and I would gladly have stayed to hear more had she wished it. I fancied, however, that she did not wish it, and I accordingly took my leave as soon as I decently could.

As I drove home I found myself revising my revised opinion of her. I felt sure now that she was something more than an ordinary society woman. Still, like everybody else at that time, I could not have said whether I liked or disliked her. But I wanted to see her again. Before I had an opportunity of doing so, however, I received a request with regard to her which developed my latent curiosity into honest interest, and added a certain sense of duty to my half formed wish to know more of her.

The request arrived in the shape of a letter from Lady Adeline Hamilton-Wells, an intimate friend of mine, and one who has always had my most sincere respect and affection. She is a woman who lives altogether for others, devoting the greater

part of her ample means, and all the influence of an excellent position, to their service; and she is a woman who stands alone on the strength of her own individuality, for Mr. Hamilton-Wells does not count. Her great charm is her perfect sincerity. She is essentially true.

When I saw her note on the breakfast table next day, I knew that somehow it would prove to be of more importance than the whole of my other letters put together, and I therefore hastened to open it first.

"VILLA MIGNONNE, 15th March, 1880.

"Colonel Colquhoun, late of the Colquhoun Highlanders, has been appointed to command the depôt at Morningquest, I hear. Kindly make his wife's acquaintance at your earliest convenience to oblige me. She is one of the Fraylings of Fraylingay. Her mother is a sister of Mrs. Orton Beg's, and a very old friend of mine. I used to see a good deal of Mrs. Colquhoun up to the time that she met her husband, and she was then a charming girl, quiet, but clever. I lost sight of her after her marriage, however, for about two years, and only met her again last January in Paris, when I found her changed beyond all knowing of her, and I can't think why. She is not on good terms with her own people for some mysterious reason, but, apart from that, she seems to have everything in the world she can want, and makes quite a boast of her husband's kindness and consideration. I noticed that she did not get on well with men as a rule, and she may repel you at first, but persevere, for she *can* be fascinating, and to both sexes too, which is rare; but I am told that people who begin by disliking often end by adoring her—people with anything in them, I mean, for, as I have learnt to observe under your able tuition, the 'blockhead majority' *does* do despitefully by what it cannot comprehend. And that is why I am writing to you. I am afraid Evadne will come into collision with some of the prejudices of our enlightened neighbourhood. She is not perfect, and nothing but perfection is good enough for certain angelic women of our acquaintance. They will call her very character in question at the trial tribunals of their tea-tables if she be, as I think, of the kind who cause comment; and they will throw stones at her and make her suffer even if they do her no permanent injury. For I fear that she is nervously sensitive both to praise and blame, a woman to be hurt inevitably in this battle of life, and a complex character

which I own I do not perfectly comprehend myself yet, perhaps because parts of it are still nebulous. But doubtless your keener insight will detect what is obscure to me, and I rely upon you to befriend her until my return to England, when I hope to be able to relieve you of all responsibility.

"Tell me, too, how you get on with Colonel Colquhoun. I should like to know what you think of them both.

"ADELINE HAMILTON-WELLS."

My answer to this letter has lately come into my possession, and I give it as being of more value probably than any subsequent record of these early impressions:

"FOUNTAIN TOWERS, 19th March, 1880.

"MY DEAR LADY ADELINE:

"I had made Mrs. Colquhoun's acquaintance before I received your letter, and have seen her three times altogether. And three times has not been enough to enable me to form a decided opinion of her character, which seems to be out of the common. Had you asked me what I thought of her after our first meeting, I should have said she is peculiar; after the second I am afraid I should have presumed to say not 'much'; but now, after the third, I am prepared to maintain that she is decidedly interesting. Her manner is just a trifle stiff to begin with, but that is so evidently the outcome of shyness that I cannot understand anybody being repelled by it. Her voice is charming, every tone is exquisitely modulated, and she expresses herself with ease, and with a certain grace of diction peculiarly her own. It is a treat to hear English spoken as she speaks it. She uses little or no slang and few abbreviations, but she is perfectly fearless in her choice of words, and invariably employs the one which expresses her meaning best, however strong it may be, yet somehow the effect is never coarse. Yesterday she wanted to know the name of an officer now at the barracks, and made her husband understand which she meant in this way: 'He is a little man,' she said, 'who puts his hands deep down in his pockets, hunches up his shoulders, and says *damn* emphatically.' How she can use such words without offence is a mystery; but she certainly does.

"All this, however, you must have observed for yourself, and I know that it is merely skimming about your question, not answering it. But I humbly confess, though it cost me

your confidence in my 'keen insight' forever, that I cannot answer it. So far, Mrs. Colquhoun has appealed to me merely as a text upon which to hang conclusions. I do not in the least know what she is, but I can see already what she will become—if her friends are not careful; and that is a phrase-maker.

"Colonel Colquhoun is likely to be a greater favourite here than his wife. Ladies say he is 'very nice!' 'so genial,' and 'a *thorough* Irishman!' whatever they mean by that. He does affect both brogue and blarney when he thinks proper. Perhaps, however, I ought to tell you at once that I do not like him, and am not at all inclined to cultivate his acquaintance. He strikes me as being a very commonplace kind of military man, tittle-tattling, idle, and unintellectual; and in the habit of filling up every interval of life with brandy and soda water. The creature is rapidly becoming extinct, but specimens still linger in certain districts. And I should judge him upon the whole to be the sort of man who pleases by his good manners those whom he does not repel by his pet vices—most people, that is to say. The world is constant and kind to its own.

"They are at As-You-Like-It, the gloomiest house in the neighbourhood. I fancy Colonel Colquhoun took it to suit his own convenience without consulting his wife's tastes or requirements, and he will be out too much to suffer himself, but I fear she will feel it. She is a fragile little creature, for whose health and well-being generally I should say that bright rooms and fresh air are essential. The air at As-You-Like-It is not bad, but the rooms are damp. That west window in the drawing room is the one bright spot in the house, and the sun only shines on it in the afternoon. I am sorry that I cannot answer your letter more satisfactorily, but you may rest assured that I shall be glad to do Mrs. Colquhoun any service in my power.

"Diavolo wrote and told me the other day that his colonel thinks him too good for the Guards, and has strongly advised him, if he wishes to continue in the service, to exchange into some other regiment! I have asked him to come and stay with me, and hope to discover what he has been up to. With your permission, I should urge him to apply for the Depôt at Morningquest. It would do the duke good to have him about again, and Angelica would be delighted; and, besides, Colonel Colquhoun would keep his eye on him and put up with more pranks probably than those who know not Joseph.

"Angelica is very well and happy. Her devotion to her husband continues to be exemplary, and he has been good-natured enough to oblige her by delivering some of her speeches in parliament lately, with excellent effect. She read the one now in preparation aloud to us the last time I was at Ilverthorpe. It struck me as being extremely able, and eminent for refinement as well as for force. Mr. Kilroy himself was delighted with it, as indeed he is with all that she does now. He only interrupted her once. 'I should say the country is going to the dogs, there,' he suggested. 'Then, I am afraid your originality would provoke criticism,' Angelica answered.

"When do you return? I avoid Hamilton House in your absence, it looks so dreary all shut up.

"Yours always, dear Lady Adeline,

"GEORGE BETON GALBRAITH."

CHAPTER IV.

HAVING despatched my letter, I began to consider how I might best follow up my acquaintance with Evadne with a view to such intimacy as should enable me at any time to have the right to be of service to her should occasion offer, and during the day I arranged a dinner party for her special benefit, not a very original idea, but by accident it answered the purpose.

The Colquhouns accepted my invitation, but when the evening arrived Evadne came alone, and quite half an hour before the time. I had dressed, luckily, and was strolling about the grounds when I saw the carriage drive up the avenue, and hastened round the house to meet her at the door.

"The days are getting quite long," she said, as I helped her to alight. Then, glancing up at a clock in the hall, she happened to notice the time. "Is that clock right?" she asked.

"It is," I answered.

"Then my coachman must have mistaken the distance," she said. "He assured me that it would take an hour to drive here. But I shall not have occasion to regret the mistake if you will let me see the house," she added gracefully. "It seems to be a charming old place."

It would have been a little awkward for both of us but for

this happy suggestion; there were, however, points of interest enough about the house to fill up a longer interval even.

"But I am forgetting!" she exclaimed, as I led her to the library. "I received this note from Colonel Colquhoun at the last moment. He is detained in barracks to-day, most unfortunately, and will not be able to get away until late. He begs me to make you his apologies."

"I hope we shall see him during the evening," I said.

"Oh, yes," she answered, "he is sure to come for me."

There was a portrait of Lady Adeline in the library, and she noticed it at once.

"Do you know the Hamilton-Wellses?" she asked, brightening out of her former manner instantly.

"We are very old friends," I answered. "Their place is next to mine, you know."

"I did not know," she said. "I have never been there. Lady Adeline knows my people, and used to come to our house a good deal at one time; that is where I met her. I like her very much—and trust her."

"That everybody does."

"Do you know her widowed sister, Lady Claudia Beaumont?"

"Yes."

"And their brother, Lord Dawne?"

"Yes—well. He and I were 'chums' at Harrow and Oxford, and a common devotion to the same social subjects has kept us together since."

"He is a man of most charming manners," she said thoughtfully.

"He is," I answered cordially. "I know no one else so fastidiously refined, without being a prig."

She was sitting on the arm of a chair with Adeline's photograph in her hand, and was silent a moment, looking at it meditatively.

"You must know that eccentric 'Ideala,' as they call her, also?" she said at last, glancing up at me gravely.

"We do not consider her eccentric," I said.

"Well, you must confess that she moves in an orbit of her own," she rejoined.

"Not alone, then," I answered, "so many luminaries circle round her."

"Lady Adeline criticises her severely," she ventured, with a touch of asperity.

"*Les absents ont toujours torts*," I answered. "But, at the same time, when Lady Adeline criticises Ideala severely, I am sure she deserves it. Her faults are patent enough, and most provoking, because she could correct them if she would. You don't know her well?"

"No."

"Ah! Then I understand why you do not like her. She is not a person who shows to advantage on a slight acquaintance, and in that she is just the reverse of most people; her faults are all on the surface and appear at once, her good qualities only come out by degrees."

"I feel reproved," Evadne answered, smiling. "But it is really hard to believe that the main fabric of a character is beautiful when one only sees the spoilt bits of it. You must be quite one of that clique," she added, in a tone which expressed "What a pity!" quite clearly.

"You are not interested in social questions?" I ventured.

"On the contrary," she answered decidedly, "I hate them all."

She put the photograph down, and looked round the room.

"Where does that door lead to?" she asked, indicating one opposite.

"Into my study."

"Then you do not study in the library?"

"No. I read here for relaxation. When I want to work I go in there.

"Let me see where you work?"

I hesitated, for I kept my tools there, and I did not know what might be about.

"It is professional work I do there," I said.

She was quick to see my meaning: "Oh, in that case," she began apologetically. "I am indiscreet, forgive me. I have not realized your position yet, you see. It is so anomalous being both a doctor and a country gentleman. But what a dear old place this is! I cannot think how you can mix up medical pursuits with the names of your ancestors. Were I you I should belong to the Psychical Society only. The material for that kind of research lingers long in these deep recesses. It is built up in thick walls, and concealed behind oak panels. Oh, how *can* you be a doctor here!"

"I am not a doctor here," I assured her, "at least only in the morning when I make this my consulting room."

"I am glad," she said. "This is a place in which to be human."

"Is a doctor not human, then?" I asked, a trifle piqued.

"No," she answered, laughing. "A doctor is not a man to his lady patients; but an abstraction—a kindly abstraction for whom one sends when a man's presence would be altogether inconvenient. If I am ever ill I will send for you in the abstract confidently."

"Well, I hope I may more than answer your expectations in that character," I replied, "should anything so unfortunate as sickness or sorrow induce you to do me the favour of accepting my services."

She gave me one quick grave glance. "I know you mean it," she said; "and I know you mean more. You will befriend me if I ever want a friend."

"I will," I answered.

"Thank you," she said.

It was exactly what I had intended with regard to her since I had received Lady Adeline's letter, but a compact entered into on the occasion of our fourth meeting struck me as sudden. I had no time to think of it, however, at the moment, for Evadne followed up her thanks with a question.

"How do you come to have an abode of this kind and be a doctor also?" she asked.

"The house came to me from an uncle, who died suddenly, just after I had become a fully qualified practitioner," I told her; "but there is not income enough attached to it to keep it up properly, and I wanted to live here; and I wanted besides to continue my professional career, so I thought I would try and make the one wish help the other."

"And the experiment has succeeded?"

"Yes."

"Are you very fond of your profession?"

"It is the finest profession in the world."

"All medical men say that," she remarked, smiling.

"Well, I can claim the merit—if it be a merit—of having arrived at that conclusion before I became——"

"Eminent?" she suggested.

"Before I had taken my degree," I corrected.

"So you came and established yourself as a doctor in this old place?"

She glanced round meditatively.

"That seems to surprise you?"

"It is the dual character that surprises me," she answered. "Your practice makes you a professional man, and you are a

county magnate also by right of your name and connections."

She evidently knew all about me already, and I was flattered by the interest she showed, which I thought special until I found that she was in the habit of knowing, and knowing accurately too, all about everyone with whom she was brought into close contact.

"I cannot imagine how you find time for it all," she continued; "you are not a general practitioner, I believe."

"Not exactly," I answered. "Of course I never refuse to attend in any case of emergency, but my regular practice is all consultation, and my speciality has somehow come to be nervous disorders. Sometimes I have my house full of patients—interesting cases which require close attention."

"I know," she said, "and poor people who cannot pay as often as the rich who will give you anything to attend them."

"I should very much like you to believe the most exaggerated accounts of my generosity if any such are about," I hastened to assure her; "but honesty compels me to explain that I benefit by every case which I treat successfully."

"Go to! you do not deceive me," she answered, laughing up in my face.

Her manner had quite changed now. She recognized me as one of her own caste, and knew that however friendly and familiar she might be I should not presume.

When it was time to think of my other guests, she begged to be allowed to remain in the library until they had all arrived.

"It would be such an exertion to have to explain to each one separately how it is that I am here alone—and I do so dislike strange people," she added plaintively. "It makes me quite *ill* to have to meet them. And, besides," she broke out laughing, "as it is a new place, perhaps I ought to try and make myself interesting and of importance to the inhabitants by coming in late! When you keep people waiting for dinner you *do* become of consequence to them—to their comfort—and then they think of you!"

"But not very charitably under such circumstances," I suggested.

"That depends," she answered. "If you arrive in time to save their appetites, they will associate a pleasant sense of relief with your coming which will make them think well of you for evermore. They mistake the sensation for an opinion, and as they like it, they call it a good one!"

She looked pretty when she unbent like that and talked nonsense—or what was apt to strike you as nonsensical until you came to consider it. For there was often a depth of worldly wisdom and acuteness underlying her most apparently careless sallies that surprised you.

She lingered long in the library—so long that at first I felt impatiently that she might have remembered that I had an appetite as well as the strangers within my gates with whom it apparently pleased her to trifle, and I felt obliged, during an awkward pause, to account for the delay by explaining for whom we were waiting. If she were in earnest about wishing to make a sensation or attract special attention to herself, she had gained her end, for the moment I mentioned the name of Colquhoun, people began to speak of her, carefully, because nobody knew as yet who her friends might be, but with interest. I never supposed for a moment, however, that she was in earnest. There was something proudly self-respecting about her which forbade all idea of anything so paltry as manœuvring. I did at first think that she might have fallen asleep; but, afterward, on recollecting that she was a nervous subject, it occurred to me that her courage might have failed her, and that she would never present herelf to a whole room full of strangers alone. Excusing myself to my guests, therefore, as best I could, I went at last to the library, and found that this latter surmise was correct. She was standing in the middle of the room with her hands clasped, evidently in an agony of nervous trepidation. I went up to her, however, as if I had not noticed it, and offered her my arm.

"If you will come now, Mrs. Colquhoun," I said, "we will go to dinner."

She took my arm without a word, but I felt as soon as she touched me that her confidence was rapidly returning, and by the time we had reached the drawing room, and I had explained that Colonel Colquhoun had been detained by duty most unfortunately, but Mrs. Colquhoun had been kind enough to come nevertheless, she had quite recovered herself, and only a slight exaggeration of the habitual *noli me tangere* of her ordinary manner remained in evidence of her shyness.

When we were seated at table, and she was undoubtedly at her ease again, I expected to see her vivacity revive; but the nervous crisis had evidently gone deeper than her manner, and affected her mood. I had left her all life and animation, a mere girl bent upon pleasure, but with every evidence of con-

siderable capacity for the pursuit; but now, at dinner, she sat beside me, cold, constrained, and listless, neither eating nor interested; pretending, however, courageously, and probably deceiving those about her with the even flow of polished periods which she kept up to conceal her indifference. I thought perhaps her husband's absence had something to do with it, and expected to see her brighten up when he arrived. He did not come at all, however, and only once at table did she show any sign of the genuine intellectual activity which I was now pretty sure was either concealed or slumbering in these moods. The sign she made was deceptive, and probably only a man of my profession, accustomed to observe, and often obliged to judge more by indications of emotion than by words, would have recognized its true significance. In the midst of her chatter she became suddenly silent, and one might have been excused for supposing that her mind was weary; but that, in truth, was the moment when she really roused herself, and began to follow the conversation with close attention. There was an old bore of a doctor at table that evening who would insist on talking professionally, a thing which does not often happen in my house, for I think, of all "shop," ours is the most unsuitable for general conversation because of the morbid fascination it has for most people. Ladies especially will listen with avidity to medical matters, perceiving nothing gruesome in the details at the moment; but afterward developing nerves on the subject, and probably giving the young practitioner good reason to regret unwary confidences. I tried to stave off the topic, but the will-power of the majority was against me, and finally I found myself submitting, and following my friend's unwholesome lead.

"You must have some curious experiences, in your branch of the profession especially," the lady on my left remarked.

"We do," I said, answering her expectations against my better judgment, and partly, I think, because this was the moment when Evadne woke up. "I have had some myself. The extraordinary systems of fraud and deceit which are carried on by certain patients, for no apparent purpose, would astonish you. Their delight is essentially in the doing, and the one and only end of it all is invariably the same: a morbid desire to excite sympathy by making themselves interesting. I had one girl under my charge for six months, during which time she suffered daily from long fainting fits and other distressing symptoms which reduced her to the last degree of

emaciation, and puzzled me extremely because there was nothing to account for them. Her heart was perfectly sound, yet she would lie in a state of insensibility, livid and all but pulseless, by the hour together. There was no disease of any organ, but certain symptoms, which could not have been simulated, pointed to extensive disorder of one at least. It was a case of hysteria clearly, but no treatment had the slightest effect upon her, and, fearing for her life, I took her at last to Sir Shadwell Rock, the best specialist for nervous disorders now alive. He confirmed my diagnosis, and ordered the girl to be sent away from her friends with a perfect stranger, a hard, cold, unsympathetic person who would irritate her, if possible; and she was not to be allowed luxuries of any kind. I had considered the advisability of such a course myself, but the girl seemed too far gone for it, and I own I never expected to see her alive again. After she went abroad I heard that when she fainted she was left just where she fell to recover as best she could, and when any particular food disagreed with her, it was served to her incessantly until she professed to have got over her dislike for it; but in spite of such heroic treatment she was not at that time any better. Then I lost sight of her, and had forgotten the case, when one day, without any warning whatever, she came into my consulting room, looking the picture of health and happiness, and with a very fine child in her arms. 'I suppose you are surprised to see me alive,' she said. 'I am married now, and this is my boy—isn't he a beauty? And I am very happy—or rather I should be but for one thing—that illness of mine—when I gave you so much trouble——' 'Oh, don't mention that,' I interrupted, thinking she had come to overwhelm me with undeserved thanks: 'My only trouble was that I could do nothing for you. I hope you recovered soon after you went abroad?' 'As soon as I thought fit,' she answered significantly, 'and that is what I have come about. I want to confess. I want to relieve my mind of a burden of deceit. Doctor—I was never insensible in one of those fainting fits; I never had a symptom that I could not have controlled. I was shamming from beginning to end.' 'Well, you nearly shammed yourself out of the world,' I said. 'Tell me how you did it?' 'I can't tell you exactly,' she answered. 'When I wanted to appear to faint I just set my mind somehow—I can't do it now that I am happy, and have plenty of interests in life. At that time I had nothing to take me out of myself, and those daily doings were an

endless source of occupation and entertainment to me. But lately I have had qualms of conscience on the subject.'"

"And was she cured?" Evadne asked.

"Oh, yes," I answered. "There was no fear for her after she confessed. When the moral consciousness returns in such cases, and there is nothing but relief of mind to be gained by confession, the cure is generally complete."

"But what could have been the motive of such a fraud?" somebody asked.

"It is difficult to imagine," I answered. "Had it been more extensive the explanation would have been easier; but as myself and the young lady's parents were her only audience, I have never been able to account for it satisfactorily."

I noticed, while I was speaking, that Evadne was thinking the problem out for herself.

"She would not have given herself so much trouble without a very strong motive," she now suggested, "and human passions are the strongest motives for human actions, are they not?"

"Of course," I said, "but the question is, what passion prompted her. It could not have been either anger, ambition, revenge, or jealousy."

"No," she answered, in the matter-of-fact tone of one who merely arrives at a logical conclusion, "and it must therefore have been love. She was in love with you, and tried in that way to excite your sympathy and attract your attention."

"It is quite evident that view of the case never occurred to you, Galbraith," Dr. Lauder observed, laughing.

And I own that I *was* taken aback by it, considerably—not of course as it affected myself, but because it gave me a glimpse of an order of mind totally different from that with which I should have credited Evadne earlier in the evening.

"But how do you treat these cases?" she proceeded. "Is there any cure for such depravity?"

"Oh, yes," I answered confidently. "They are being cured every day. So long as there is no organic disease, I am quite sure that wholesome surroundings, patience and kind care, and steady moral influence will do all that is necessary. The great thing is to awaken the conscience. Patients who once feel sincerely that such courses are depraved may cure themselves—if they are not robbed of their self-respect. The most hopeless cases I have, come from that class of people who give each other bits of their mind—very objectionable

bits, consisting of vulgar abuse for the most part, and the calling of names that rankle. The operators seem to derive a solemn kind of self-satisfaction from the treatment themselves, but it does for the patient almost invariably."

This led to a discussion on bad manners, during which Evadne relapsed. I saw the light go out of her eyes, and she showed no genuine interest in anything for the rest of the evening; and when I had wrapped her up, and seen her drive away, I somehow felt that the entertainment had been a failure so far as she was concerned, and I wondered why she should so soon be bored. At her age she should have had vitality enough in herself to carry her through an evening.

"Colonel Colquhoun will regret that he has not been able to come," she said as she wished me good-bye.

And I noticed afterward that she was always most punctilious about such little formalities. She never omitted any trifle of etiquette, and I doubt if she could have dined without "dressing" for dinner.

CHAPTER V.

COLONEL COLQUHOUN called next day himself to explain his absence on the previous evening. I forget what excuse he made, but it sufficed.

I saw Evadne, too, that same afternoon. She had been to make a call in the neighbourhood, and was waiting at a little country station to return by train. Something peculiar in her attitude attracted my attention before I recognized her. She was standing alone at the extreme end of the platform, her slender figure silhouetted with dark distinctness against the sloping evening sky. She might have been waiting anxiously for someone to come that way, or she might have been waiting for a train with tragic purpose. She wore a long dark green dress, the train of which she was holding up in her left hand. She showed no surprise when I spoke to her, although she had not heard me approach.

"What do the people here think of me?" she asked abruptly. "What do they say?"

"They have yet to discover your faults," I answered.

She compressed her lips, and looked down the line again.

"That is my train, I think," she said presently.

When I had put her into a carriage, she shook hands with

me, thanking me gravely, then threw herself back in her seat, and was borne away.

That was literally all that passed between us, yet she left me standing there, staring after her stupidly, and curiously impressed. There was always a suggestion of something unusual about her which piqued my interest and kept it alive.

During the summer and autumn I met her at various places, and saw her also in her own house, and she seemed, so far as an outsider could judge, as happily situated as most women of her station, and not at all likely to require any special service at the hands of a friend. Her husband was a good deal older than herself, but the disparity made no apparent difference to their comfort. When he was absent she never talked about him, but when he was present she treated him with unvarying consideration, and they appeared together everywhere. Mindful of my promise to Lady Adeline, I showed them both every attention in my power. I called regularly, and Colonel Colquhoun as regularly returned my calls, sometimes bringing Evadne with him.

The winter that year came upon us suddenly and sharply, and until it set in I had only seen her under the most ordinary circumstances; but at the beginning of the cold weather, she had an illness which was the means of my learning to know more of her true character and surroundings in a few days than I should probably have done in years of mere social intercourse. I stopped for a moment one morning as I drove past As-You-Like-It to leave her some flowers, and her own maid, who opened the door, showed me upstairs to a small sitting room, the ante-chamber to another room beyond, at the door of which she knocked.

I heard no answer, but the girl entered and announced me. I followed her in, and found myself face to face with Evadne. She was in bed. The maid withdrew, closing the door after her.

"What nonsense is this—I am exceedingly sorry, doctor!" Evadne exclaimed feebly. "That stupid girl must have thought that you were coming to see me professionally. But, oh! *do* let me look at the flowers!" and she stretched out her left hand for them, offering me her right at the same time to shake, and burying her face and her embarrassment together. Her hand was hot and dry.

"I don't require you in the least, doctor," she assured me,

looking up brightly from the flowers, "but I am very glad to see you."

"Why are you in bed?" I asked, responding cheerfully to this cheerful greeting.

"Oh, I have a little cold," she answered.

I drew a chair to the bedside, laid my hand on her wrist, and watched her closely as I questioned her—cough incessant; respiration rapid; temperature high, I judged; pulse 120.

"How long have you had this cold?" I asked.

"About a week," she said. "It makes me ache all over, you know, and that is why I am in bed to-day."

I saw at once that she was seriously ill, and I also saw that she was bearing up bravely, and making as little of it as possible.

"Why isn't your fire lit?" I asked.

"Oh, I never thought of having one," she answered.

"And what is that you are drinking?"

"Cold water."

"Well, you mustn't drink any more cold water, or anything else cold until I give you leave," I ordered. "And don't try to talk. I will come and see you again by and by."

I went downstairs to look for Colonel Colquhoun, and found him just about to start for barracks.

"I am sorry to say your wife is very ill," I said. "She has an attack of acute bronchitis, and it may mean pneumonia as well; I have not examined her chest. She must have fires in her room, and a bronchitis kettle at once. Don't let the temperature get below 70° till I see her again. Her maid can manage for a few hours, I suppose? But you had better telegraph for a nurse. One should be here before night."

"What a damned nuisance these women are," Colquhoun answered cheerfully. "There's always something the matter with them!"

I returned between five and six in the evening, walked in, and not seeing anybody about, went up to Evadne's sitting room. The door leading into the bedroom was open, and I entered. She was alone, and had propped herself up in bed with pillows. The difficulty of breathing had become greater, and she found relief in that attitude. She looked at me with eyes unnaturally large and solemn as I entered, and it was a full moment before she recognised me. The fires had not been lighted in either of the rooms, and she was evidently much worse,

"Why haven't these fires been lighted?" I demanded.

"This is only October," she answered, jesting, "and we don't begin fires till November."

I rang the bell emphatically.

"Do not trouble yourself, doctor," she remonstrated gently. "What does it matter?"

I went out into the sitting room to meet the maid as she entered.

"Why haven't these fires been lighted?" I asked again.

"I don't know, sir," she answered. "I received no orders about them."

"Where is Colonel Colquhoun?"

"He went out after breakfast, sir, and has not come back yet."

"Has the nurse arrived?"

"No, sir."

"Well, light these fires at once."

"I don't light fires, sir," she said, drawing herself up. "It isn't my work."

"Whose work is it?" I demanded.

"Either of the housemaids', sir, but they're both out," she answered, ogling me pertly.

I own that I was exasperated, and I showed it in such a way that she fled precipitately. I followed her downstairs to find the butler. I happened to know the man. His wife had been in my service, and I had attended her through a severe illness since her marriage.

"Do you know if there's such a thing as a sensible woman in this establishment, Williamson?" I demanded.

"Well, sir, the cook's sensible when she's sober," he answered, pinching his chin dubiously.

"Does she happen to be sober now?"

He glanced at the clock. "I'll just see, sir," he said.

When he returned he announced, with perfect gravity, that she was "passable sober, but busy with the dinner."

"Then look here," I exclaimed, out of all patience, "we must do it ourselves."

"Yes, sir," he said. "Anything I *can* do."

When I explained the difficulty, he suggested sending for his wife, who could manage, he thought, until the trained nurse arrived, and help her afterward. It was a good idea, and my man was despatched to bring her immediately.

"They're a bad lot o' servants, the women in this 'ouse at

present," Williamson informed me. "The missus didn't choose 'em 'erself"—and he shook his head significantly. "But she knows what's what, and they're going. That's why they're takin' advantage."

I returned to Evadne. Her eyes were closed and her forehead contracted. Every breath of cold air was cutting her lungs like a knife, but she looked up at me when I took her hand, and smiled. I never knew anybody so patient and uncomplaining. She was lying on a little iron bedstead, hard and narrow as a camp bed. The room was bare-looking, the floor being polished and with only two small rugs, one at the fireplace and one beside the bed, upon it. It looked like a nun's cell, and there was a certain suggestion of purity in the sweetness and order of it quite consistent with the idea; but it was a north room and very cold. Evadne had unconsciously clasped my hand, and dozed off for a few minutes, holding it tight, but the cough re-aroused her. When she looked at me again her mind was wandering. She knew me, but she did not know what she was saying.

"I am so thankful!" she exclaimed. "The peace of mind—the peace of mind—I cannot tell you what a relief it is!"

Williamson came in on tiptoe and lit the fire, and Evadne's maid followed him in and stood looking on, half sheepishly and half in defiance. I noticed now that she was a hard-faced, bold-looking girl, not at all the sort of person to have about my delicate little lady, and when Mrs. Williamson arrived, I ordered her out of the room, and never allowed her to enter it again. During the week she left altogether, and I was fortunately able to procure a suitable woman to wait upon Mrs. Colquhoun. She has been with her ever since, by the way.

I felt pretty sure by this time that no nurse had been sent for, and I therefore despatched one of Colonel Colquhoun's men in a dogcart to Morningquest to telegraph for one. But she could not arrive before daylight even by special train, and it had now become a matter of life and death, and as Mrs. Williamson had no knowledge of nursing to help her good will, I determined to spend the night beside my patient.

When Colonel Colquhoun came in and found me making myself at home in his house he expressed himself greatly pleased.

"When I returned this afternoon to see how Mrs. Colquhoun

was progressing, I found that none of my orders had been carried out, and now she is dangerously ill," I said severely.

"Faith," he replied, changing countenance, "I'm very sorry to hear it, and I'm afraid I'm to blame, for I was in the deuce of a hurry when I saw you this morning, and never thought of a word you said from that moment to this. Now I'm genuinely sorry," he repeated. "Is there nothing I can do? Mrs. Orton Beg——"

"She's gone abroad for the winter."

"Ah, to be sure!"

"And everybody else is away who would be of any use," I added, "and I therefore propose, if you have no objection, to stay here to-night myself."

"You'd oblige me greatly by doing so," he answered earnestly. "I don't know what there is for dinner, but I shall enjoy it all the more myself for the pleasure of your company."

He made no special inquiries about his wife's condition, and never went near her; but as he was in a tolerably advanced state of intoxication before he retired for the night, it was quite as well, perhaps.

Mrs. Williamson had probably done her day's work before I sent for her, and, with all the will in the world to wake and watch, she fell fast asleep before midnight, and I let her sleep. There were only the fires to be attended to—at least that was all that I could have trusted her to do. Watching the case generally, and seizing opportune moments to administer remedies would not have been in her line at all.

Evadne knew me always, but she lost all count of time.

"You seem to come every day now, doctor," she said once during the night, "and I *am* glad to see you!"

For two hours toward dawn, when the temperature is sensibly lower, I gave my little lady up; but she was better by the time the trained nurse arrived, and eventually she pulled through—greatly owing, I am sure, to her own perfect patience. She was always the same all through her illness, gentle, uncomplaining, grateful for every trifle that was done for her, and tranquillity herself. My impression was that she enjoyed being ill. I never saw a symptom of depression the whole time; but when she had quite recovered, and although, as often happens after a severe illness, when so-called "trifles" are discovered and checked which would otherwise have been allowed to run on until they grew serious—although for this reason she was certainly stronger than she had ever been since

I became acquainted with her, no sooner did she resume her accustomed habits than that old unsatisfactory something in her, which it was so easy to perceive but so difficult to define, returned in full force.

I had ceased to be critical, however. Colonel Colquhoun's careless neglect of her had continued throughout her illness, and I thought I understood.

CHAPTER VI.

I HAD necessarily seen much of Evadne during her illness, and the intimacy never again lapsed.

Jealousy was not one of Colonel Colquhoun's vices. He always encouraged any man to come to the house for whom she showed the slightest preference, and I have heard him complain of her indifference to admiration.

"She'll dress herself up carefully in the evening to sit at home alone with me, and go out to a big dinner party in the dowdiest gown she's got," he told me once. "She doesn't care a hang whether she's admired or not—rather objects, if anything, perhaps."

Colonel Colquhoun rubbed his hands here with a certain enjoyment of such perversity. But I could see that Evadne did not relish the subject. It was one afternoon at As-You-Like-It. I was tired after a long day and had dropped in to ask for some tea. Colonel Colquhoun came up to entertain me, and Evadne went on with her work while we chatted familiarly.

"You were never so civil to any of your admirers, Evadne, as you were to that great boy in the regiment," Colonel Colquhoun continued, quite blind to her obvious and natural though silent objection to being made the subject of conversation—"a young subaltern of ours," he explained to me, "a big broad-shouldered lad, six feet high, who just worshipped Evadne!"

"Poor boy!" said Evadne, sighing. "He was cruelly butchered in a horribly fruitless skirmish with his fellow-creatures during that last small war. I was glad I was able to be kind to him. He was always very nice to me."

"Well, there's a reason for everything!" Colonel Colquhoun observed gallantly.

"Don't you like boys?" Evadne asked, looking up at me.

"The ones we have here at the depôt, when they first come, fresh from the public schools, are delightful, with their high spirits, and their love affairs; their pranks, and the something beyond which will make men of them eventually. I can never see enough of *our* boys. But Colonel Colquhoun very kindly lets me have as many of them here as I like."

"Faith, I can't keep them out, for they're all in love with you," said Colonel Colquhoun.

"And I am in love with them all!" she answered brightly, leaning back in her chair, and holding up her work to look at it. As she did so, the lower half of her face was concealed from me, and her eyes were cast down. I only glanced at her, but, in the act of doing so, I suddenly became aware, by one of those curious flashes of imperfect recollection which come to us all at times to torment us, that I had seen her somewhere, before I knew who she was, in that attitude exactly; but where, or under what circumstance, I failed to recollect. The impression, however, was indelible, and haunted me ever afterward.

"Now, there's Diavolo," Colonel Colquhoun continued—the exchange I had suggested had been effected by this time, and Diavolo was quartered at the depôt—not exactly to Colonel Colquhoun's delight, perhaps, but he was very good about it. "Now, there's Diavolo. He tells me to my face that he was the first to propose to Mrs. Colquhoun, and always meant to marry her, and means it still. He said to me coaxingly, only last Friday, when I was coming out of barracks: 'Take me home with you to-day, sir.' And I answered, pretending to be severe, but pulling his sleeve, you know: 'Indeed I won't. You'll be making love to Mrs. Colquhoun.' And he got very red, and said quite huffily: 'Well, I think you might let a fellow look at her.' And of course I had to bring him back with me, and he sat down on the floor at her feet there, and got on with the most ridiculous nonsense. You couldn't help laughing! 'I should like to kill you, and carry her off,' he said, for all the world as if he meant it. And no more harm in the boy, either, than there is in Evadne herself," Colonel Colquhoun added good-humouredly.

This is a specimen of the man at his best. Latterly I had seldom seen him in such a genial mood at home—abroad he brightened up. But in his own house *now*—for a process of deterioration had been going on ever since his arrival in Morningquest—his mind was apt to resemble a dark cave which is transformed diurnally by a single shaft of sunshine

which streams in for a brief space at a certain hour. The happy moment with him occurred about the time of the tenth brandy-and-soda, as nearly as I could calculate, and it lasted till the eleventh, when he usually relapsed into gloom again, and became overcast until the next recurrence of the phenomena. But whatever his mood was, Evadne humoured it. She responded always—or tried to—when he was genial; and when he was morose, she was dumb. I thought her a model wife.

CHAPTER VII.

AFTER her illness Evadne spent much of her time in the west window of the drawing room at As-You-Like-It with her little work-table beside her, embroidering. I never saw her reading, and there were no books about the room; but the work she did was beautiful. She used to have a stand before her with flowers arranged upon it, and copy them on to some material in coloured silks direct from nature. She could not draw either with pen or pencil, or paint with a brush, but she could copy with her needle quite accurately, and would do a spray of lilies to the life, or in the most approved conventional manner, if it pleased her. Her not being able to draw struck me as a curious limitation, and I asked her once if she could account for it in any way.

"I believe I am an example of how much we owe to early influences," she answered, laughing; "and probably I have the talent both for drawing and painting in me, but it remains latent for want of cultivation. My mother drew and painted beautifully as a girl, but she had given both up before I was old enough to imitate her, and only copied flowers as I do with her needle, and I used to watch her at her work until I felt impelled to do the same. If she had gone on with her drawing I am sure I should have drawn too; but as it was, I never thought of trying."

"Moral for mothers," I observed: "Keep up your own accomplishments if you would have your daughters shine."

Evadne was not enough in the fresh air at this time, and she was too much alone. I ventured once, in my professional capacity, to say that she should have friends to stay with her occasionally, but she passed the suggestion off without either accepting or declining it, and then I spoke to Colonel Colquhoun. He, however, pooh-poohed the idea altogether.

"She's all right," he said. "You don't know her. She always lives like that; it's her way."

I also counselled regular exercise, and to that she replied: "I *do* go out. Why, you passed me yourself on the road only the other day."

I certainly had seen her more than once, alone, miles away from home, walking at the top of her speed, as if impelled by some strong emotion or inexorable necessity, and I did not like the sign. "One or two hours' walk regularly every day is what you should take," I told her. "The virtue of it is in the regularity. If you make a habit of taking a short walk daily you will have got more sunshine and fresh air, which is what you specially require, in one year than you will in two if you continue to go out in a jerky, irregular way. And you must give up covering impossible distances in feverish haste, as you do now. Walk gently, and make yourself feel that you have full leisure to walk as long as you like. You will find the effect tranquillizing. It is a common mistake to make a business of taking exercise. I am constantly lecturing my patients about it. If you want exercise to raise your spirits, brace your nerves, and do you good generally, it must be all pure pleasure without conscious exertion. Pleasurable moments prolong life."

"Thank you," Evadne answered gently. "I know, of course, that you are right, and I will do my best to profit by your advice, if it be only to show you how much I appreciate your kindness. But I must have a scamper occasionally, a regular *burst*, you know. Please don't stop that! The indulgence, when I am in the mood, is my pet vice at present."

The great drawing room at As-You-Like-It, which I had mentioned in my letter to Lady Adeline as containing the one bright spot in that gloomy abode, was an addition tacked on to the end of the house, and evidently an afterthought. It was entered by a flight of shallow steps from the hall, and was above the level of the public road, which ran close past that end of the house, the grounds and approach being on the other side. It was lighted by three high narrow windows looking toward the north, and three more close together looking west, and forming a bay so deep as to be quite a small room in itself. It almost overhung the high-road, only a tall holly-hedge being between them, but so near that the topmost twigs of the holly grew up to the window-sill. It was a quiet road, however, too far from the town for much traffic, and Evadne could sit there

with the windows open undisturbed, and enjoy the long level prospect of fertile land, field and fallow, wood and water, that lay before her. She sat in the centre window, and I think it was from thence that she learnt to appreciate the charms of a level landscape as you look down upon it, about which I heard her discourse so eloquently in after days. It was her chosen corner, and there she sat silent many and many an hour, with busy fingers and thoughts we could not follow, communing at times with nature, I doubt not, or with her own heart, and thankful to be still.

The road beneath her was one I had to traverse regularly, and it became a habit to look up as I drove past. If she were in her accustomed seat she usually raised her eyes from her work for a moment to smile me a greeting. Once she was standing up, leaning languidly against the window frame, twirling a rose in her fingers, but she straightened herself into momentary energy when she recognized me, and threw the rose at me with accurate aim. It was the youngest and most familiar thing I had known her do—an impulse of pure mischief, I thought, for the rose was *La France*, and the sentiment, as I translated it, was : "You will value it more than I do!" For she hated the French.

There often occurs and recurs to the mind incessantly a verse or an apt quotation in connection with some act or event, a haunting definition of the impression it makes upon us, and Evadne in the wide west window, bending busily over her work, set my mind on one occasion to a borrowed measure of words which never failed me from that time forward when I saw her so engaged :

> There she weaves by night and day
> A magic web of colour gay.
> She has heard a whisper say,
> A curse is on her if she stay
> To look down to Camelot.
> She knows not what the curse may be,
> And so she weaveth steadily,
> And little other care hath she,
> The lady of Shalott.

But where was Camelot? 'Fountain Towers, just appearing above the tree-tops to the north, was the only human habitation in sight. I had a powerful telescope on the highest tower, and one day, in an idle mood, I happened to be looking through it with no definite purpose, just sweeping it slowly

from point to point of the landscape, when all at once Evadne came into the field of vision with such startling distinctness that I stepped back from the glass. She was sitting in her accustomed place, with her work on her lap, her hands clasped before her, leaning forward looking up in my direction with an expression in her whole attitude that appealed to me like a cry for help. The impression was so strong that I ordered my dogcart out and drove over to As-You-Like-It at once. But I found her perfectly tranquil when I arrived, with no trace of recent emotion either in her manner or appearance.

When I went home I had the telescope removed. I had forgotten that we overlooked that corner of As-You-Like-It.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE idea that Evadne was naturally unsociable was pretty general, and Colonel Colquhoun believed it as much as anybody. I remember being at As-You-Like-It one afternoon when he rallied her on the subject. He had stopped me as I was driving past to ask me to look at a horse he was thinking of buying. The animal was being trotted up and down the approach by a groom for our inspection when Evadne returned from somewhere, driving herself.

She pulled up beside us and got out.

"I never see you driving any of your friends about," Colonel Colquhoun remarked. "You're very unsociable, Evadne."

"Oh, well, you see," she answered slowly, "I like to be alone and think when I am driving. It worries me to have to talk to people—as a rule."

"Well," he said, glancing at the reeking pony, "if your thoughts went as fast as Blue Mick seems to have done to-day, you must have got through a good deal of thinking in the time."

Evadne looked at the pony. "Take him round," she said to the groom; and then she remarked that it must be tea-time, and asked us both to go in, and have some.

The air had brought a delicate tinge of colour to her usually pale cheeks, and she looked bright and bonny as she sat beside the tea-table, taking off her gloves and chatting, with her hat pushed slightly up from her forehead. It was an expansive

moment with her, one of the rare ones when she unconsciously revealed something of herself in her conversation.

There were some flowers on the tea-table which I admired.

"Ah!" she said, with a sigh of satisfaction in their beauty; "I derive all my pleasure in life from things inanimate. An arrangement of deep-toned marigolds with brown centres in a glass like these, all aglow beneath the maiden-hair, gives me more pleasure than anything else I can think of at this moment."

"Not more pleasure than your friends do," I ventured.

"I don't know," she replied. "In the matter of love *surgit amari aliquid.* Friends disappoint us. But in the contemplation of flowers all our finer feelings are stimulated and blended, and yet there is no excess of feeling to end in regrets, or a painful reaction. When the flowers fade, we cheerfully gather fresh ones. But I hope I do not undervalue my friends," she broke off. "I only mean to say—when you think of all the uncertainties of life, of sickness and death, and other things more dreadful, which overtake our dearest, do what we will to protect them; and then that worst thing whether it be in ourselves or others: I mean change—when you think of it all, surely it is well to turn to some delicate source of delight, like this, for relief—and to forget," and she curved her slender hand round the flowers caressingly, looking up at me at the same time as if she were pleading to be allowed to have her own way.

I did not remonstrate with her. I hardly knew the danger then myself of refusing to suffer.

It was some weeks before I saw her again after that. I had been busy. But one day, as I was driving into Morningquest, I overtook her on the road, walking in the same direction. I was in a close carriage, but I pulled the check-string as soon as I recognized her, and got out. She turned when she heard the carriage stop, and seeing me alight came forward and shook hands. She looked wan and weary.

"Those are fine horses of yours," was her smileless greeting. "How are you?"

"Have you been having a 'burst'?" I said—she was quite five miles from home. She looked up and down the road for answer, and affected to laugh, but I could see that she was not at all in a laughing mood, and also that she was already over-fatigued. I thought of begging to be allowed to drive her back, but then it occurred to me that, even if she con-

sented, which was not likely, as she had a perfect horror of giving trouble, and would never have been persuaded that I was not going out of my way at the greatest personal inconvenience merely to pay her a polite attention ; but even if she had consented, she would probably have had to spend the rest of the day alone in that great west window, with nothing to take her out of herself, and nothing more enlivening to look at than dreary winter fields under a sombre sky, and that would not do at all. A better idea, however, occurred to me.

"I am going to see Mrs. Orton Beg," I said. "She is not very well.

Evadne had been staring blandly at the level landscape, but she turned to me when I spoke, and some interest came into her eyes.

"Have you seen her lately," I continued.

"N-no," she answered, as if she were considering ; "not for some time.

"Come now," I boldly suggested. "It will do her good. I won't talk if you want to think," I added.

Her face melted into a smile at this, and on seeing her stiffness relax, I wasted no more time in persuasion, but returned to the carriage and held the door open for her. She followed me slowly, although she looked as if she had not quite made up her mind, and got in ; but still as if she were hesitating. Once she was seated, however, I could see that she was not sorry she had yielded ; and presently she acknowledged as much herself.

"I believe I was tired," she said.

"Rest now, then," I answered, taking a paper out of my pocket. She settled herself more luxuriously in her corner, put her arm in the strap, and looked out through the open window. The day was mild though murky, the sky was leaden gray. We rolled through the wintry landscape rapidly—brown hedgerows, leafless trees, ploughed fields, a crow, two crows, a whole flock home-returning from their feeding ground ; scattered cottages, a woman at a door looking out with a child in her arms, three boys swinging on a gate, a man trudging along with a bundle, a labourer trimming a bank ; mist rising in the low-lying meadows ; grazing cattle, nibbling sheep ;—but she did not see these things at first, any of them ; she was thinking. Then she began to see, and forgot to think. Then her fatigue wore off, and a sense of relief, of ease, and of well-being generally, took gradual

possession of her. I could see the change come into her countenance, and before we had arrived in Morningquest, she had begun to talk to me cheerfully of her own accord. We had to skirt the old gray walls which surrounded the palace gardens, and as we did so, she looked up at them—indifferently at first, but immediately afterward with a sudden flash of recognition. She said nothing, but I could see she drew herself together as if she had been hurt.

"Do you go there often?" I asked her.

"No—Edith died there; and then that child," she answered, looking at me as if she were surprised that I should have thought it likely.

"She shrinks from sorrowful associations and painful sights," I thought. But I did not know, when I asked the question, that our poor Edith had been a particular friend of hers.

We stopped the next moment at Mrs. Orton Beg's, and she leant forward to look at the windows, smiling and brightening again.

I helped her out and followed her to the door, which she opened as if she were at home there. She waited for me for a moment in the hall till I put my hat down, and then we went to the drawing room together, and walked in in the same familiar way.

Mrs. Orton Beg was there with another lady, a stout but very comely person, handsomely dressed, who seemed to have just risen to take her leave.

The moment Evadne saw this lady she sprang forward. "*Oh, Mother!*" she cried, throwing her arms round her neck.

"Evadne—my dear, dear child!" the lady exclaimed, clasping her close and kissing her, and then, holding her off to look at her. "Why, my child, how thin you are, and pale, and weak——"

"Oh, mother—I *am* so glad! I *am* so glad!" Evadne cried again, nestling close up to her, and kissing her neck; and then she laid her head on her bosom and burst into hysterical sobs.

I instantly left the room, and Mrs. Orton Beg followed me.

"They have not met since—just after Evadne's marriage," she explained to me. "Evadne offended her father, and there still seems to be no hope of a reconciliation."

"But surely it is cruel to separate mother and child," I exclaimed indignantly. "He has no right to do that."

"No, and he would not be able to do it with one of us," she answered bitterly; "but my sister is of a yielding disposition. She is like Mrs. Beale, one of the old-fashioned 'womanly women,' who thought it their duty to submit to everything, and make the best of everything, including injustice, and any other vice it pleased their lords to practise. But for this weakness of good women the world would be a brighter and better place by this time. We see the disastrous folly of submitting our reason to the rule of self-indulgence and self-interest now, however; and, please God, we shall change all that before I die. He will be a bold man soon who will dare to have the impertinence to dictate to us as to what we should or should not do, or think, or say. No one can pretend that the old system of husband and master has answered well, and it has had a fair trial. Let us hope that the new method of partnership will be more successful."

"Yes, indeed!" I answered earnestly.

Mrs. Orton Beg looked up in my face, and her own countenance cleared.

"You and Evadne seem to be very good friends," she said. "I am so glad." Then she looked up at me again, with a curious little smile which I could not interpret. "Does she remind you of anybody—of anything, ever?" she asked.

"Why—surely she is like you," I said, seeing a likeness for the first time.

"Yes," she answered, in a more indifferent tone. "There is a likeness, I am told."

I tried afterward to think that this explained the haunting half recollection I seemed to have of something about Evadne; but it did not. On the contrary, it re-awakened and confirmed the feeling that I had seen Evadne before I knew who she was, under circumstances which I now failed to recall.

Thinking she would like to be alone after that interview with her mother, I left the carriage for her, and walked back to Fountain Towers; and the state I was in after doing the ten miles warned me that I had been luxuriating too much in carriages lately, and must begin to practise what I preached again in the way of exercise, if I did not wish to lay up a fat and flabby old age for myself.

I made a point of not seeing Evadne for some little time after that event; so that she might not feel bound to refer to it in case she should shrink from doing so. But the next time we met, as it happened, I had another glimpse of her feeling

for her friends, which showed me how very much mistaken I had been in my estimate of the depth of her affections. It was at As-You-Like-It. I had walked over from Fountain Towers, and dropped in casually to ask for some tea, and, Colonel Colquhoun arriving at the same moment from barracks, we went up to the drawing room together, and found Evadne in her accustomed place, busy with her embroidery as usual. She shook hands, but said nothing to show that she was aware of the interval there had been since she saw me last. When she sat down again, however, she went on with her work, and there was a certain satisfied look in her face, as if some little wish had been gratified and she was content. I knew when she took up her work that she liked me to be there, and wanted me to stay, for she always put it down when visitors she did not care for called, and made a business of entertaining them. But we had scarcely settled ourselves to talk when the butler opened the door, and announced "Mr. Bertram Frayling," and a tall, slender, remarkably handsome young fellow, with a strong family likeness to Evadne herself, entered with boyish diffidence, smiling nervously, but looking important, too. Evadne jumped up impetuously.

"*Bertram!*" she exclaimed, holding out her arms to him. "Why, what a big fellow you have grown!" she cried, finding she could hardly reach to his neck to hug him. "And how handsome you are!"

"They say I am just like you," he answered, looking down at her lovingly, with his arm around her waist. Neither of them took any notice of us.

"This is your birthday, dear," Evadne said. "I have been thinking of you the whole day long. I always keep all the birthdays. Did you remember mine?"

"I—don't think I did," he answered honestly. "But this is my twenty-first birthday, Evadne, and that's how it is I am here. I am my own master from to-day."

"And the first thing you do with your liberty is to come and see your sister," said Colonel Colquhoun. "You're made of the right stuff, my boy," and he shook hands with him heartily.

Evadne clung with one hand to his shoulder, and pressed her handkerchief first to this eye and then to that alternately with the other, looking so glad, however, at the same time, that it was impossible to say whether she was going to laugh or cry for joy.

"But aren't there rejoicings?" she asked.

"Oh, yes!" he answered. "But I told my father if you were not asked I should not stay for them. I was determined to see you to-day." He flushed boyishly as he spoke, and smiled round upon us all again.

"But wasn't he very angry?" Evadne said.

"Yes," her brother answered, twinkling. "The girls got round him, and tried to persuade him, but they only made him worse, especially when they all declared that when they came of age they meant to do *something*, too! He said that he was afflicted with the most obstinate, ill-conditioned family in the county, and began to row mother as if it were her fault. But I wouldn't stand that!"

"You were right, Bertram," Evadne exclaimed, clenching her hands. "Now that you are a man, never let mother be made miserable. Did she know you were coming?"

"Yes, and was very glad," he answered, "and sent you messages."

But here Colonel Colquhoun and I managed to slip from the room. Evadne sent her brother back that day to grace the close of the festivities in his honour, but he returned the following week, and stayed at As-You-Like-It, and also with me, when he confirmed my first exceedingly good impression of him. Evadne quite wakened up under his influence, but, unfortunately for her, he went abroad in a few weeks for a two years' trip round the world, and, I think, losing him again so soon made it almost worse for her than if they had never been reunited, especially as another and irreparable loss came upon her immediately after his departure. This was the sudden death of her mother, the news of which arrived one day in a curt note written by her father to Colonel Colquhoun, no previous intimation of illness having been sent to break the shock of the announcement. I can never be thankful enough for the happy chance which brought about that last accidental meeting of Evadne with her mother. But for that, they would not have seen each other again; and I had the pleasure of learning eventually that the perfect understanding which they arrived at during the few hours they spent together on that occasion, afterward became one of the most comforting recollections of Evadne's life—"A hallowed memory," as she herself expressed it, "such as it is very good for us to cherish. Thank Heaven for the opportunity which renewed and intensified my appreciation of my mother's love and goodness, so as to make my last impression of her one which must stand out

distinctly forever from the rest, and be always a joyful sorrow to recall. Do you know what a *joyful* sorrow is? Ah! something that makes one feel warm and forgiving in the midst of one's regrets, a delicious feeling; when it takes possession of you, you cease to be hard and cold and fierce, and want to do good."

Mrs. Frayling died of a disease for which we have a remedy nowadays—or, to speak plainly, she died for want of proper treatment. Her husband gloried in what he called "a rooted objection to new-fangled notions," and would not send for a modern practitioner even when the case became serious, preferring to confide it entirely to a very worthy old gentleman of his own way of thinking, with one qualification, who had attended his household successfully for twenty-four years, during which time only one other member of his family had ever been seriously ill, and he also had died. But I hope and believe that my poor little lady never knew the truth about her mother's last illness. She was overwhelmed with grief as it was, and it cut one to the quick to see her, day after day, in her black dress, sitting alone, pale and still and uncomplaining, her invariable attitude when she was deeply distressed, and not to be able to say a word or do a thing to relieve her. As usual at that time of the year, everybody whom she cared to see at all was away except myself, so that during the dreariest of the winter months she was shut up with her grief in the most unwholesome isolation. As the spring returned, however, she began to revive, and then, suddenly, it appeared to me that she entered upon a new phase altogether.

CHAPTER IX.

DURING the first days of our acquaintance Evadne's attitude, whatever happened, surprised me. I could anticipate her action up to a certain point, but just the precise thing she would do was the last thing I had expected; I knew her feeling, in fact, but I was ignorant of the material it had to work upon, and by means of which it found expression. I had begun by believing her to be cold and self-sufficing, but even before her illness I had perceived in her a strange desire for sympathy, and foreseen that on occasion she would exact it in large measure from anyone she cared about. It was making much of a cut finger one day that she had led me to ex-

pect she would be exacting in illness, languishing as ladies do, to excite sympathy; and when the illness came I found I had been right in so far as I had believed that she would appreciate sympathy, but entirely wrong about the means she would employ to obtain it. Instead of languishing, when she found herself really suffering, she pulled herself together, and bore the trial with heroic calm. As I have said, she never uttered a complaint; and she had the strength of mind to ignore annoyances which few people in perfect health could have borne with fortitude. Certainly her attitude then had excited sympathy, and respect as well. It was as admirable as it was unexpected.

I had also perceived that she could not bear anything disagreeable. She seldom showed the least irritability herself, nor would she tolerate it for a moment in anyone else. Servants who were not always cheerful had to go, and the kind of people who snap at each other in the bosom of their families she carefully avoided, turning from them instinctively as she would have done from any perception revolting to the physical senses; and that she would fly disgusted from sickening sights or sounds or odours I never doubted. But here again I was wrong—or rather the evidence was utterly misleading. I found her one day sitting on the bridge of a little river that crossed a quiet lane near their house, and got down from my horse to talk to her, and as we stood looking over the parapet looking into the stream, the bloated carcase of a dead dog came floating by. She could only have caught a glimpse of it, for she drew back instantly, but she looked so pale and nauseated that I had to take her to the house, and insist upon her having some wine. And I once took her, at her own earnest request, to visit a children's hospital; but before we had seen a dozen of the little patients she cried so piteously I was obliged to take her away; and she could never bear to speak of the place afterward. And lastly, I had seen how she shrank from going to the palace because of the association with Edith's terrible death, and the chance of seeing her poor, repulsive looking little boy there.

Yet when it came to be a question of facing absolute horrors in the interests of the sufferers, she was the first to volunteer, and she did so with a quiet determination there was no resisting, and every trace of inward emotion so carefully obliterated that one might have been forgiven for supposing her to be altogether callous.

This happened after her mother's death, in the spring, when she had already begun to revive, and was the first startling symptom she showed of the new phase of interest and energy upon which I suspected she was entering. I hoped at the time that the great grief had carried off the minor ailments of the mind as the great illness did of the body, and that the change would prove to be for the better eventually, although the first outcome of it was not the kind of thing I liked at all—for her.

I had not seen her for a week or so when she was ushered one morning into my consulting room. She had not asked for an appointment, and had been waiting to take her turn with the other patients.

"Well, what can I do for *you?*" I said. I was somewhat surprised to see her. "You don't look very ill."

"No, thank goodness," she answered cheerfully; "and I don't mean to be ill. I have come to be vaccinated."

"Ah, that is wise," I said.

"You have heard, I suppose, that small-pox has broken out in the barracks?" she said when she was going. "There are fifteen cases, four of them women, and one a child, and they are going to put them under canvas on the common, and I shall be obliged to go and see that they are properly nursed. That is why I am in such a hurry. Military nursing is of the most primitive kind in times of peace. Our doctor is all that he should be, but what can he do but prescribe? It takes all his time just to go round and get through his ordinary duties."

"Did I understand you to say that you are going to look after the small-pox patients?" I asked politely.

"Yes," she answered defiantly. "I am going to be isolated with them out on the common. My tent is already pitched. I shall not take small-pox, I assure you."

"I don't see how you can be so sure," I said.

She gave me one of her most puzzling answers, one of those in which I felt there was an indication of the something about her which I did not understand.

"Oh, because it is such a relief!" she said.

"How a relief?" I questioned.

"Oh—I shall not take the disease," she repeated, "and I shall enjoy the occupation."

But this, I knew, was an evasion. However, I had no time to argue the point with her just then, so I waited until my consultations were over, and then went to see Colonel Colqu-

houn. I thought if he would not forbid he might at all events persuade her to abandon her rash design. I found him at his own place, walking about the garden with his hands in his pockets, and a cigar in his mouth. He was in a facetious mood, the one of his I most disliked.

"Now, you look quite concerned," he said, with an extra affectation of brogue, when I had told him my errand. "Sure, she humbugs you, Evadne does! If you knew her as well as I do, you'd not be troubling yourself about her so much. I tell you, she'll come to no harm in the world. Now what do you think were her reasons for going to live in the small-pox camp?"

"Then she *has* gone!" I exclaimed.

"Oh, yes, she's gone," he answered. "The grass never has time to grow under that young woman's feet if she's an idea to carry out, I will say that for her. But what do you think she said when I asked her why she'd be going among the small-pox patients? 'Oh,' she said, 'I want to see what they look like!' And she'd another reason, too. She'll make herself look like an interesting nurse, you know, and quite enjoy dressing up for the part."

I felt sure that all this was a horrid perversion of the truth, but I let it pass.

"You'll not interfere, then?" I persisted.

"Not I, indeed!" he answered. "She never comes commandering it over me, and I'm not going to meddle with her private affairs, so long as she doesn't come here bringing infection, that's all."

"But she may catch the disease herself and die of it, or be disfigured for life," I remonstrated.

"And she might catch her death of cold here in the garden, or be burnt beyond all recognition by a spark setting fire to her ball-dress the next time she wears one," he answered philosophically. "When you look at the chances, now, they're about equal."

He smiled at me complacently when he had said this, and something he saw in my face inclined him to chuckle, but he suppressed the inclination, twirling his fair moustache instead, first on one side and then on the other, rapidly. In his youth he must have been one of those small boys who delighted to spear a bee with a pin and watch it buzz round. The boy is pretty sure the bee can't hurt him, but yet half the pleasure of the performance lies in the fact of its having a sting. It would not have been convenient for Colonel Colquhoun to

quarrel with me, because there had been certain money transactions between us which left him greatly my debtor; but he thought me secured by my interest in Evadne, and indulged himself on every possible occasion in the pleasure of opposing me. Not that he bore me any ill-will, either. I knew that he would borrow more money from me at any time in the friendliest way, if he happened to want it. I was his honey bee, and he was fond of honey; but it delighted him also to see me buzz.

I was obliged to consider my own patients and keep away from the small-pox camp during the epidemic, for fear of carrying infection, and consequently I saw nothing of Evadne, and only heard of her through the military doctor, for she would not write. His report of her, however, was always the same at first. She was the life of the camp, bright, cheerful, and active, never tired apparently, and never disheartened. This went on for some time, and then, one evening, there came another report. She was just as cheerful as ever, but looking most awfully done.

At daybreak next morning I drove out to the common, and, leaving my dogcart outside the camp, went in to look for her. I knew that she was generally up all night, and was therefore prepared to find her about, and I met her making her way toward her own tent. She was dressed like a French *bonne*, in a short dark blue gown made of some washing material, with a white apron and white cap, and a châtelaine with useful implements upon it hanging from her girdle, a very suitable costume for the work; but she wore no wrap of any kind, and the morning air was keen.

I noticed as she walked toward me that her gait was a little uncertain. Once she put out her hand as if seeking something to grasp, and once she staggered and stopped. I hastened to her assistance, and saw as I approached her that she was colourless even to her lips; her eyes were bright and sunken, with large black circles round them, and the lids were heavy. I drew her hand through my arm without more formal greeting, and she grasped it gratefully for a moment, then dropped it and stepped back.

"I forgot," she said, "it seems so natural to see you anywhere. But don't touch me. I shall infect you."

"I shall have to go home and change in any case," I answered briskly.

"I've been up all night with a poor woman," she said, "and

I'm just tired out. Don't look concerned, though. I shall not take small-pox. My own illness, you remember, was a blessing in disguise, and I am sure the absorbing distraction of helping to relieve others——" she stopped short, looked about her confusedly, and then exclaimed: "It is quite time I went to bed. I declare I don't know the Hospital Tent from the sandy common, nor a rabbit running about from a convalescent child, and the whin bushes are waltzing round me derisively." She swayed a little, recovered herself, tried to laugh, then threw up her hands, and fell forward into my arms.

I carried her to her tent, guided by one of the men. On the way Dr. James joined us. We laid her on her bed and looked anxiously for symptoms of the dreadful disease, but there were none.

"No, you see," Dr. James declared, "it's just what I expected—sheer exhaustion, and nothing else. But she'd better be got out of this atmosphere at once."

She was in a semi-unconscious, semi-somnolent state, half syncope, half sleep, and there was nothing to be gained by rousing her just then, so we wrapped her up warmly in shawls, sent for my dogcart, and lifted her on the back seat, where I supported her as best I could, while my man drove us to As-You-Like-It.

Colonel Colquhoun was not up when we arrived, but I waited to see her swallow some champagne after she had been put to bed, and in the meantime the bustle had aroused him. When he learnt the occasion of it, his wrath knew no bounds. He could not have abused me in choicer language if I had been one of his own subalterns. But I managed to keep my temper until I could get a word in, and then I mildly suggested that the best thing he could do, as he was so afraid of infection, was to give himself leave, and be off. "Nobody will expect *you* to stay and look after your wife," I said. "You'd better go to town."

It was what he would have done if I had not advised it, but the habit of opposing me was becoming so inveterate that he changed his mind, and, rather than act upon a suggestion of mine, ran the risk of living in barracks until all fear of infection was over.

Happily Evadne suffered from nothing worse than exhaustion, and soon recovered her strength; but I never could agree with Dr. James about the merit of her conduct during the epidemic.

CHAPTER X.

IT was about this time, that is to say, immediately after the outbreak of small-pox was over, and in the height of the summer, that Mr. and Lady Adeline Hamilton-Wells returned from a prolonged absence abroad, and settled themselves for a few months at Hamilton House. I happened to be in London when they arrived, and saw them there as they passed through. Lady Adeline made particular inquiries about Evadne. "I don't think you, any of you, understand that girl," she said. "She is shy, and should be set going. She requires to be *induced* to come forward to do her share of the work of the world, but, instead of helping her, everybody lets her alone to mope in luxurious idleness at As-You-Like-It."

"She is never idle," I protested.

"I know what you mean," Lady Adeline answered. "She sits and sews; but that is idle trifling for a woman of her capacity. She was out of health and good-for-nothing when I saw her last with Mrs. Orton Beg in Paris, and therefore I held my peace; but now I mean to take her out of herself, and show her her mistake."

"I hope you will be able to do so," I said, and I was not speaking ironically; but all the same I scarcely expected that she would succeed. The day after my return home, however, which was only a week later, I called at Hamilton House, and it seemed to me then that she had already made a very good beginning. It was a brilliant afternoon, and I had walked through the fields from Fountain Towers, and found Lady Adeline alone for the moment, sitting out on the terrace under an awning, somewhat overcome by the heat.

"You have arrived at an acceptable time, as you always do," she said, in her decided kindly way. "I am enjoying a brief period of repose before the racket begins again, and I invite you to share it."

"The racket?" I inquired.

"No, the repose," she replied. "Angelica is staying here, and Evadne——"

"Mrs. Colquhoun and racket!" I ejaculated.

"Well, it is difficult to associate the two ideas, I confess," she answered; "but you will see for yourself. Angelica makes the racket, of course, but Evadne enjoys it. I went to As-You-

Like-It as soon as I could, without waiting for her to call upon me, and I found her just as you had led me to expect, all staid propriety and precision, hiding deep dejection beneath an affectation of calm content—at least, that was my interpretation of her attitude—and inclined to be stiff with me; but I approached her as her mother's oldest and dearest friend, and she softened at once."

"And you brought her here?"

"That is quite the proper word for it," she rejoined. "I just brought her. I insisted upon her coming. I gave her no choice. And I also asked Colonel Colquhoun, but he declined. He said he thought Evadne would be all the better for getting away from home, and I agreed with him. He comes over, however, occasionally, and they seem to be very good friends. I don't dislike him at all."

This was said tentatively, but I did not care to discuss Colonel Colquhoun, and therefore, to change the subject, I asked Lady Adeline how she found Angelica.

"Very much improved in every way," she answered. "The happiest understanding has come to exist between herself and her husband since that dreadful occurrence. They are simply inseparable. She said to me the other day that her only chance of ever showing to any advantage at all would be against the quiet background of her husband's unobtrusive goodness. And I think myself that a great many people would never have believed in her if he had not. All her faults are so apparent, alas! while the very real and earnest purpose of her life is so seldom seen."

"She has been working very hard lately, I believe."

"Yes," Lady Adeline answered; "but I am thankful to say she has set up a private secretary, and who do you think it is? Our dear good Mr. Ellis!"

"I am heartily glad to hear of it," I said, "both for his sake and hers."

"Yes, she agreed. "It did not seem right that he should ever go away from amongst us, and you know how we all felt the severance after Diavolo went into the service, and there seemed no help for it, as his occupation was over. I am afraid, poor fellow, his experiences since he left us have been anything but happy. All that is over now, however, and it does seem so natural to have him about again!"

"He must make an admirable secretary," I said.

"Admirable!" she agreed—"in every way, for I don't

think Angelica would ever have got on quite so well with anybody else. He was always able to make her respect him, and now the habit is confirmed, so that he has more influence with her for good than almost anybody else—a restraining influence, you know. Her great fault still is impatience. She thinks everything should be put right the moment she perceives it to be wrong, and would raise revolutions if she were not restrained. It is always difficult to make her believe that evolution if slower is surer. But here they are."

As Lady Adeline spoke, Angelica, accompanied by Mr. Kilroy and Mr. Ellis, came out of the plantation to the left of the terrace upon which we were sitting, and walked across the lawn toward us, while at the same moment Diavolo and Evadne came round the corner of the house from the opposite direction and went to meet them. Evadne carried a parasol, but wore neither hat nor gloves. She looked very happy, listening to Diavolo's chatter.

Angelica carried a fishing rod, and I thought, as she approached, that I had never seen a more splendid specimen of hardy, healthy, vigorous young womanhood.

Evadne looked sickly beside her, and drooping, like a pale and fragile flower in want of water. The contrast must have struck Lady Adeline also, for presently she observed: "Evadne was as strong as Angelica once. Do you suppose her health has been permanently injured by that horrid Maltese fever?"

"No," I said positively. "If she would give up sewing, and take a fishing rod, and go out with Angelica in a sensible dress like that, she would be as strong as ever in six months. But I fancy she would be shocked by the bare suggestion."

Angelica hugged Diavolo heartily when they met, and then, being the taller of the two, she put her arm round his neck, and all three strolled slowly on toward us, Mr. Ellis and Mr. Kilroy having already come up on to the terrace and sat down. While greeting the two latter I lost sight of the Heavenly Twins, and when I looked at them again something had evidently gone wrong. Angelica stood leaning on her rod berating Diavolo, who was answering with animation, while Evadne looked from one to the other in amazement, as the strange good child looks at the strange naughty ones. Whatever the difference was it was soon over, and then they came on again, talking and walking briskly, followed by four dogs.

"I *am* vulgar, decidedly, at times," Angelicaacknowledged as she came up the steps. "I shouldn't be half so amusing if

I were not." She held out her hand to me, and then threw herself into the only unoccupied chair on the terrace, but instantly jumped up again. "I beg your pardon, Evadne," she said. "These are my society manners. When I am on the platform or otherwise engaged in *Unwomanly* pursuits outside the *Sphere*, I have to be more considerate."

Some more chairs were brought out, one of which Diavolo placed beside me. "This is for you," he said to Evadne; "I know you like to be near the Don." Evadne flushed crimson.

"Did you ever hear that story?" Angelica asked me.

Evadne's embarrassment visibly increased. "Angelica, don't tell it," she remonstrated; "It isn't fair."

Angelica laughed. "When Evadne first came here," she proceeded, "she sat next you at dinner one night, and didn't know who you were; but it seems you made such a profound and favourable impression upon her that afterward she had the curiosity to ask, when she learnt that you were a doctor. 'A doctor!' she exclaimed in surprise. 'He is more like a Don than a doctor!' and you have been 'Don' to her intimates ever since."

"Well, I feel flattered," I said.

"I feel as if I ought to apologise," Evadne began—"only I meant no disrespect."

"My dear," Angelica interposed, "he is delighted to be distinguished by you in any way. But, by the pricking of my thumbs, something wicked"—and Colonel Colquhoun came out on to the terrace through the drawing room behind us. He shook hands with us all, his wife included, and then sat down.

"I say, Evadne——" Diavolo began.

"My dear boy," said Lady Adeline, "you mustn't call Mrs. Colquhoun by her Christian name."

"Christian!" jeered Diavolo. "Now, that *is* a good one! There's nothing Christian about Evadne. We looked her up in the dictionary ages ago, didn't we, Angelica? The name means Well-pleasing-one, as nearly as possible, and it suits her sometimes. Evadne—classical Evadne—was noted for her devotion to her husband, and distinguished herself finally on his funeral pyre—she ex-pyred there."

We all groaned aloud. "It was a somewhat theatrical exit, I confess," Diavolo pursued. "But, I say, Angelica, wouldn't it be fun to burn the colonel, and see Evadne do suttee on his body—only I doubt if she would!" He turned to Evadne.

"Mrs. Colquhoun," he began ceremoniously; "may I have the honour of calling you by your heathen name—as in the days beyond recalling?"

"When you are good," she answered.

"Ugh!" he exclaimed. "I should have had more respect for your honesty if you said 'no' at once. And it is very absurd of you, too, Evadne, because you know you are going to marry me when Colonel Colquhoun is promoted to regions of the blest. She would have married me first, only you stole a march on me, sir," he added, addressing Colonel Colquhoun. "However, I feel as if something were going to happen *now*, at last! There was a banshee wailing about my quarters in a minor key, very flat, last night. She had come all the way from Ireland to warn Colonel Colquhoun, and mistaken the house, I suppose."

"My dear——"

We all looked round. It was Mr. Hamilton-Wells addressing Lady Adeline in his most precise manner. He was standing in the open French window just behind us, tapping one hand with the *pince-nez* he held in the other.

"My dear, the cat has five kittens."

"My *dear!*" Lady Adeline exclaimed.

"They have only just arrived and——"

"Never mind them *now*," she cried hurriedly.

"But, my dear, you were anxious to know."

"I don't want to know in the least," she protested.

"But only this morning you said——"

"Oh, that was upstairs," she interrupted.

"What difference does that make?" he wanted to know. "You don't mean to say you are anxious about the cat when you are upstairs, and not anxious when you come down?"

Lady Adeline sank back in her chair, and resigned herself to a long altercation. Before it ended everybody else had disappeared, and I saw no more of Evadne on that occasion. But during the next few weeks I had many opportunities of observing the wonderful way she was waking up under the influence of the Heavenly Twins.

They gave her no time for reflection; it was the life of action against the life of thought, and it suited her.

The ladies frequently made my house the object of an afternoon walk, and stayed for tea. Lady Adeline declared that the "girls" dragged her over because they wanted a new victim to torment with their superabundant animal spirits,

The superabundance was all Angelica's, I knew, but still Evadne was an accomplice, and they neither of them spared me in those days. They would rob my hot-houses of the best fruits and flowers, disarrange my books, turn pictures they did not like with their faces to the wall, drape my statues fantastically, criticise what they called my absurd bachelor habits, and give me good advice on the subject of marriage; Lady Adeline sitting by meanwhile, aiding and abetting them with smiles, although protesting that she would not allow them to make me the butt of their idle raillery.

Evadne had a passion for the scent of gorse. She crammed pockets, sleeves, shoes, and the bosom of her dress with the yellow blossoms, and I often found these fragrant tokens of her presence scattered about my house after she had been there. Once, when we were all out walking together, she stopped to pick some from a bush, and as she was putting them into her bodice she made a remark which gave me pause to ponder.

"You will want to know why I do that, I suppose," she said. "You will be looking for a motive, for some secret spring of action. The simple fact that I love the gorse won't satisfy you. You would like to know why I love it, when I first began to love it, and anything else about it that might enable you to measure my feeling for it."

This was so exactly what I was in the habit of doing with regard to many matters that I could not say a word. But what struck me as significant about the observation was the obvious fact, gathered by inference, that, while I had been studying her, she also had been studying me, and I had never suspected it.

She walked on with Angelica after she had spoken, and I dropped behind with Lady Adeline.

"*Your* Evadne and Colonel Colquhoun's wife are two very different people," I said. "The one is a lively girl, the other a sad and bitter woman."

"Sad, not bitter," Lady Adeline corrected.

"I have heard her say bitter things!" I maintained.

"You may, perhaps, have heard her condemn wrong ones rather too emphatically," Lady Adeline suggested. "But all this is only a phase. She is in rather a deep groove at present, but we shall be able to get her out of it."

"I don't know," I answered dubiously. "I don't think it is that exactly. I believe there is some kind of warp in her

mind. I perceive it, but can neither define nor account for it yet. It is something morbid that makes her hold herself aloof. She has never allowed anybody in the neighbourhood to be intimate with her. Even I, who have seen her oftener than anybody, never feel that I know her really well—that I could reckon upon what she would do in an emergency. And I believe that there is something artificial in her attitude; but why? What is the explanation of all that is unusual about her?"

Lady Adeline shook her head, and was silent for some seconds, then she said: "I once had a friend—but her moral nature quite halted. It was because she had lost her faith in men. A woman who thinks that only women can be worthy is like a bird with a broken wing. But I don't say that that is Evadne's case at all. Since she came to us she has seemed to be much more like one of those marvellous casks of sherry out of which a dozen different wines are taken. The flavour depends on the doctoring. Here, under Angelica's influence—why, she has filled your pocket with gorse blossoms!"

It was true. In taking out my handkerchief, I had just scattered the flowers, and so discovered that they were there. "Then you give her credit for less individuality—you think her more at the mercy of her surroundings than I do," I said.

But before she could answer me, Evadne herself had joined us. I suppose I was looking grave, for she asked in a playful tone:

"Did he ever frolic, Lady Adeline, this solemn seeming—*Don?* Was he always in earnest, even on his mother's lap, and occupied with weighty problems of life and death when other babes were wondering with wide open eyes at the irresponsible action of their own pink toes?"

Which made me reflect. For if I were in the habit of being a dull bore myself it was no wonder that I seldom saw her looking lively.

The following week Evadne went home, and as soon as she was settled at As-You-Like-It, she seemed to relapse once more into her former state of apathy. I saw her day after day as I passed, sitting sewing in the wide west window above the holly hedge; and so long as she was left alone she seemed to be content; but I began to notice at this time that any interruption at her favourite occupation did not please her. The summer heat, the scent of flowers streaming through open windows, the song of birds, the level landscape, here vividly

green with the upspringing aftermath, there crimson and gold where the poppies gleamed amongst the ripening corn—all such sweet sensuous influences she looked out upon lovingly, and enjoyed them—so long as she was left alone. On hot afternoons, Diavolo would go and lie at her feet sometimes, with a cushion under his head; and him she tolerated; but only, I am sure, because he always fell asleep.

I had to go to As-You-Like-It one day to transact some business with Colonel Colquhoun, and when we had done he asked me to go up into the drawing room with him. "Come, and I'll show you a pretty picture," he said.

It *was* a pretty picture. They had both fallen asleep on that occasion. It was a torrid day outside, but the deep bay where they were was cool and shady. The windows were wide open, the outside blinds were drawn down low enough to keep out the glare, but not so far as to hide the view. Behind Evadne was a stand of flowers and foliage plants. Diavolo was lying on the floor in his favourite attitude with a black satin cushion under his head, and was, with his slender figure, refined features, thick, curly, fair hair, and fine transparent skin, slightly flushed by the heat, a perfect specimen of adolescent grace and beauty. He looked like a young lover lying at the feet of his lady. Evadne was sitting in a low easy chair, with a high back, against which her head was resting. Half her face was concealed by a fan of white ostrich feathers which she held in her left hand, and the moment I looked at her the haunting certainty of having seen her in exactly that position once before recurred to me. She was looking well that afternoon. Her glossy dark brown hair showed bright as bronze against the satin background of the chair. She was dressed in a gown of silver gray cashmere lined with turquoise blue silk, which showed between the folds; cool colours of the best shade to set off the ivory whiteness of her skin.

Colonel Colquhoun considered the group meditatively. "She keeps her looks," he observed in an undertone; "and Diavolo's catching her up."

I looked at him inquiringly.

"She's six or eight years older than he is, you know," he explained; "but you wouldn't think it now."

I wondered what he had in his mind.

"Times are changing," he proceeded. "Now, when I was a lad, if a lady had liked me as well as Evadne likes that boy, I'd have taken advantage of her preference."

"Not if the lady had been of her stamp," I said drily.

"Well, true for you," he acknowledged. "But it isn't the lady only in this case. It's that young sybarite himself. He's as particular as she is. He said the other day at mess—it was a guest night, and there was a big dinner on, and somebody proposed 'Wine and Women' for a toast, but he wouldn't drink it: 'Oh, spare me,' he said, in that slow way he has, something like his father's; 'Wine and women, as you take them, are things as coarse in the way of pleasure as pork and porter are for food.' We asked him then to give us his own ideas of pleasure; but he said he didn't think anybody there was educated up to them, even sufficiently to understand them!—and he wasn't joking altogether, either," Colonel Colquhoun concluded.

At that same moment Evadne opened her eyes wide, and looked at us a second before she spoke, but showed no other sign of surprise.

"I am afraid I have been asleep," she said, rising deliberately, and shaking hands with me across the prostrate Diavolo. "Do sit down."

She sank back into her own chair as she spoke, and fanned a fly from Diavolo's face. "I never knew anyone sleep so soundly," she said, looking down at him lovingly. "He rides out here nearly every day when he is not on duty, simply for his siesta. Angelica is jealous, I believe, because he will not go to her. He says there is no repose about Angelica, and that it is only here with me that he finds the dreamful ease he loves."

There was a sound of talking outside just then, and a few minutes later Angelica herself came in with her father.

"Oh, you *darling!* you *are* a pretty boy!" she exclaimed, when she saw Diavolo, and then she went down on her knees beside him, put her arms round his neck, pulled him up, and hugged him roughly, an attention which he immediately resented. "Ah, I thought it was you!" he said, opening his eyes. "Good-bye, sweet sleep, good-bye!" Then he sat up, and, turning his back to Evadne, coolly rested himself against her knee. "I suppose we can have tea now," he said. "There's always something to look forward to. Papa, dear, touch the bell, to save the Colonel the trouble."

Colonel Colquhoun laughed, and rang it himself good-naturedly.

"Diavolo!" Evadne exclaimed, pushing him away, "I am not going to nurse a great boy like you."

"Well, Angelica must, then," he said, changing his position so as to lean against his sister. Angelica laid her hand on his head, and her face softened. "Evadne *used* to like to nurse me," he complained. "She's not nearly so nice since she married. I say, Angelica, do you remember the wedding breakfast, when we agreed to drink as much champagne as the bridegroom? I swore I would never get drunk again, and I never have."

"Faith," said Colonel Colquhoun, "there are some who'd like to be able to say the same thing."

Some dogs had followed Angelica in, and had now to be turned out, because Evadne would not have dogs indoors. She said she liked a good dog's character, but could not bear the smell of him.

"And how are the children?" Mr. Hamilton-Wells asked affably, when this diversion was over.

"There are no children!" Evadne exclaimed in surprise.

"Are there not, indeed. Now, that is singular," he observed. Then he looked at me as if he were about to say something interesting, but I hastily interposed. I was afraid he was going to speculate about the natural history of the phenomenon which had just struck him as being singular. He knew perfectly well that Evadne had no children, but he was subject, or affected to be subject, to moments of obliviousness, in which he was wont to ask embarrassing questions.

"The weather is quite tropical," was the original observation I made. Mr. Hamilton-Wells felt if the parting of his smooth, straight hair was exactly in the middle, patted it on either side, then shook back imaginary ruffles from his long white hands, and interlaced his jewelled fingers on his lap.

"You were never in the tropics, I think you told me?" he said to Evadne, with exaggerated preciseness. "Ah! now, I have been, off and on, several times. The heat is very trying. I knew a lady, the wife of a Colonial Governor, who used to be so overcome by it that she was obliged to undo all her things, let them slip to the ground, and step out of them, leaving them looking like a great cheese. She told me so herself, I assure you, and she was an exceedingly stout person."

The Heavenly Twins went into convulsions suddenly.

"Is that tea at last?" Evadne asked.

Colonel Colquhoun and I both gladly moved to make room

for the servants who were bringing it in, and the conversation was not resumed until they had withdrawn. Then Angelica began: "I came to make a last appeal to you, Evadne. I want to tell you about a poor girl——"

"Oh, don't break this lovely summer silence with tales of woe!" Evadne exclaimed, interrupting her. "I cannot do anything. Don't ask me. You harrow my feelings to no purpose. I will not listen. It is not right that I should be forced to know."

"Well, I think you are making a mistake, Evadne," Angelica replied. "Don't you think so?" looking at me. "She is sacrificing herself to save herself. She imagines she can secure her own peace of mind by refusing to know that there is a weary world of suffering close at hand which she should be helping to relieve. Suffering for others strengthens our own powers of endurance; we lose them if we don't exercise them—and that is the way you are sacrificing yourself to save yourself, Evadne. When some big trouble of your own, one of those which cannot be denied, comes upon you, it will crush you. You will have lost the moral muscle you should be exercising now to keep it in good working order and develop it well for your own use when you require it. It would not be worse for you to take a stimulant or a sedative to wind yourself up to an artificially pleasurable state when at any time you are not naturally cheerful—and that is what a too great love of peace occasionally ends in."

Evadne waved her ostrich feather fan backward and forward slowly, and looked out of the window. She would not even listen to this friendly counsel, and I felt sure she was making a mistake.

I only saw her once again that summer under Lady Adeline's salutary influence. It was a few days later, and Evadne was in an expansive mood. She had been spending the day with Lady Adeline, and the two had been for a drive together, and had overtaken me on the road and picked me up on their way back to Hamilton House. I had been for a solitary ramble, and was then returning to work, but Evadne said I must go back to tea with them: "For your own sake, because it is a shame to waste a summer day in work—a glorious summer day so evidently sent for our enjoyment."

"The greatest pleasure in life is to be in perfect condition for the work one loves," I answered; but I was settling myself comfortably in the carriage as I spoke, such is the consistency

of man. But indeed it was not very difficult to persuade me to idle that afternoon. I had been inclining that way for weeks, under the influence of the intoxicating heat doubtless; and presently, when I found myself comfortably seated on the wide stone terrace outside the great drawing room at Hamilton House; under a shady awning, looking down upon lawns vividly green and lovely gardens all aglow with colour and alive with perfume, which is the soul of the flowers, I yielded sensuous service to the hour, and gave myself up to the enjoyment of it unreservedly.

Mr. Hamilton-Wells was there, making tea in the precisest manner, and looking more puritanical than ever. How to reconcile his coldly formal exterior with the interior from which emanated his choice of subjects in conversation is a matter which I have not yet had time to study, although I am convinced that the solution of the problem would prove to be of great scientific value and importance. I was not in the habit of thinking of him as either a man or a woman myself, however, but as a specimen of humanity broadly, and domestically as a husband whom I always suspected of being a sharp sword of the law, although I had never obtained the slightest evidence of the fact.

Lady Adeline was lolling in a low cane chair, fatigued by her drive, and longing aloud for tea; and Evadne was flitting about with her hat in her hand, laughing and talking more than any of us. She was wearing an art gown, very becoming to her, and suitable also for such sultry weather, as Mr. Hamilton-Wells remarked.

"I suppose you are a strong supporter of the æsthetic dress movement," he said, doubtless alluding to the graceful freedom of her delicate primrose draperies.

"Not at all," she answered, seating herself on the arm of a chair near Lady Adeline, and opening her fan gently as she spoke.

I was inspired to ask for more tea just then. Mr. Hamilton-Wells poured it out and handed it to me. "You take milk," he informed me, "but no sugar." Then he folded his hands and recommenced. "To return to the original point of departure," he began, "which was modern dress, if I remember rightly"—he smiled round upon us all, knowing quite well that he remembered rightly—"that brings us by an obvious route to another question of the day; I mean the position of women. How do you regard their position at this latter end of the nineteenth century, Evadne?"

"I do not regard it at all, if I can help it," she answered incisively.

Mr. Hamilton-Wells dropped his outspread hands upon his knees.

"If I remember rightly," he said, "you take no interest in politics either. That is quite a phenomenon at this latter end of the nineteenth century."

"I have my duties—the duties of my social position, you know," she answered, "and my own little pursuits as well, neither of which I can neglect for the affairs of the world."

"But are they enough for you?" Lady Adeline ventured.

Evadne glanced up to see what she meant, and then smiled. "The wisdom of ages is brought to the training of each little girl," she said; "and to fit her for our position, she is taught that a woman's one object in life is to be agreeable."

"You mean that a woman of decided opinions is not an agreeable person?" Lady Adeline asked.

"Decided opinions must always be offensive to those who don't hold them," Evadne rejoined.

"A woman must know that the future welfare of her own sex, and the progress of the world at large, depends upon the action of women now, and the success attending it," Angelica observed comprehensively.

"Yes, but she knows also that her own comfort and convenience depend entirely on her neutrality," Evadne answered. "It is not high-minded to be neutral, I know, when it is put in that way; but a woman who is so becomes exactly what the average man, taken at his word, would have her be, and he is, we are assured, the proper person to legislate."

She looked at us all defiantly as she spoke, and furled her fan; and just at that moment Colonel Colquhoun joined us. He had come to fetch her, and his entrance gave a new turn to the conversation.

"It has been oppressively hot all day," he observed.

"Yes," Lady Adeline answered, "and I do so long for the mountains in weather like this."

"Oh, do you?" said Evadne. "Are you subject to the magnet of the mountains? I am not. I do not want to feel the nothingness of man; I like to believe in his greatness, in his infinite possibilities. I like to think of life as a level plain over which we can gallop to some goal—I don't know what, but something desirable; and the actual landscape pleases me best so. The great tumbled mountains make me melancholy, they

are always foreboding something untoward, even at the best of times; but the open spaces, windswept and evident—I love them. I am at home on them. I can breathe there—I am free."

This was the natural woman at last, in her aspirations unconsciously showing herself superior to the artificial creature she was trying to be.

"I hate the melancholy mountains," the ever-ready Angelica burst forth. "I loathe the inconstant sea. The breezy plain for a gallop! It is there that one feels free!"

Colonel Colquhoun looked at Evadne meditatively, and slowly twisted each end of his heavy blond moustache. "I haven't seen you riding for some time now," he said, "and it's a pity, for you've a fine seat on a horse."

I was obliged to make up that night for the time lost in the afternoon, and the dawn had broken when at last I put my work away. I opened the study windows wider to salute it. A lark was singing somewhere out of sight—

Die Lerche, die im augen nicht,
Doch immer in den ohren ist—

and the ripples of undecipherable sound struck some equally inarticulate chord of sense, and fell full-fraught with association. The breeze, murmurous amongst the branches, set the leaves rustling like silk attire. Did I imagine it, or was there really a faint sweet perfume of yellow gorse in the air? A thrush on a bough below began to flute softly, trying its tones before it burst forth, giving full voice to its enthusiasm in one clear call, eloquent of life and love and longing, and all expressed in just three notes—crotchet, quaver, crotchet and rest—which shortly shaped themselves to a word in my heart, a word of just three syllables, the accent being on the penultimate—"E-vad-ne! E-vad-ne!"

Good Heavens!

I roused myself. Not a proper state of mind certainly for a man of my years and pursuits. Why, how old was I? Thirty-five—not so old in one way, yet ten years older at least than—stop—sickly sentimentality. "Life is real, life is earnest," and there must be no dreams of scented gorse, of posing in daffodil draperies, for me. Must take a holiday and rest—take my "agreeable ugliness" off (I was amused when the Heavenly Twins told me their mother talked of my "agree-

able ugliness" ; but, now, did I like it? No. I was cynical when I said it) take my "agreeable ugliness" off to the mountains—"Turn thine eyes unto the mountains"—the magnet of the mountains. Yes, I felt it. I delighted to do so. I was not morbid. To the mountains! to the cold which stays corruption, the snows which are pure, and the eternal silence! By ten o'clock that night I was well on my way.

CHAPTER XI.

I WENT abroad that year for my holiday, but spent the last week of it in London on my way home. All the vapours of sentimentality had disappeared by that time. My nerves had been braced in the Alps, my mind had been calmed and refreshed by the warm blue Mediterranean, my sense of comparison emphasized in Egypt, where I perceived anew the law of mutability, the inevitable law, by the decree of which the human race is eternal, while we, its constituent atoms, have but a moment of intensity to blaze and burn out. Perishable life and permanent matter are we, with a limit that may be prolonged in idea by such circumstances as we can dwell on with delight, one love-lit day being longer in the record than whole monotonous years. It is good to live and love, but if we possess the burden of life unrelieved by the blessing of love, or the hope of it, well—why despair? Man is matter animated by a series of emotions, the majority of which are pleasurable. Disappointment ends like success, and the futile dust of nations offers itself in evidence of the vanity of all attributes except wisdom, the wisdom that teaches us to accept the inevitable silently, and endure our moment with equally undemonstrative acquiescence, whether it comes full fraught with the luxury of living, or only brings us that which causes us to contemplate of necessity, and without shrinking, the crowning dignity of death.

I had come back ready for work, and could have cheerfully dispensed with that week's delay in London; but I had promised it to an old friend, in failing health, whom I would not disappoint.

The people at Morne, the Kilroys, the Hamilton-Wellses, the Colquhouns, all my circle of intimate friends, had fallen into the background of my recollection during my tour abroad; but, now again, when I found myself so near them,

the old habitual interests began to be dominant. I had sent notes to apologize for not wishing them good-bye before my sudden departure, but I had not written to any of them or heard from them during my absence, and did not know where they might all be at the moment; and I was just wondering one night as I walked toward Piccadilly from the direction of the Strand—I was just wondering if they were all as I had left them, if the civil war, as Angelica called it, was being waged as actively as ever between herself and Evadne upon the all-important point—and that made me think of Evadne herself. I had banished her name from my mind for weeks, but now some inexplicable trick of the brain suddenly set her before me as I oftenest saw her, sitting at work in the wide west window overlooking the road, and glancing up brightly at the sound of my horse's hoofs or carriage wheels as I rode or drove past, to salute me. A lady might wait and watch so at accustomed hours for her lover; but he would stop, and she would open the window, and lean out with a flower in her hand for him, and perhaps she would kiss it before she tossed it to him, and he would catch it and go on his way rejoicing —a pretty poetical dream and easy of fulfilment, if only one could find the lady, suitably circumstanced.

I had arrived at Piccadilly Circus by this time, at the turn into Regent Street where the omnibuses stop, and was delayed for a moment or two by the casual crowd of loiterers and people struggling for places, and by those who were alighting from the various vehicles. Not being in any hurry myself, it amused me to observe the turmoil, the play of human emotion which appeared distinctly on the faces of those who approached me and were lost to sight again as soon as seen in the eddy and whirl of the crowd. There was temper here, and tenderness there; this person was steadily bent on business, that on pleasure, and one fussy little man escorting his family somewhere was making the former of the latter. There were two young lovers alone with their love so far as any outward consciousness of the crowd was concerned; and there was a young wife silent and sad beside a neglectful elderly husband. It was the 'buses from the west end I was watching. One had just moved off toward the Strand, and another pulled up in its place, and the people began to alight —a fat man first in a frenzy of haste, a sallow priest whose soul seemed to sicken at the sight of the seething mass of humanity amongst which he found himself, for he hesitated per-

ceptibly on the step, like a child in a bathing machine who shrinks from the water, before he descended and was engulfed in the crowd. A musician with his instrument in a case, two fat women talking to each other, a little Cockney work-girl, and her young man, and then—a lady. There could be no mistake about her social status. The conductor, standing by the step, recognized it at once, and held out his arm to assist her. The gaslight flared full upon her face, the expression of which was somewhat set. She wore no veil, and if she did not court observation, she certainly did not shun it. She was quietly but richly dressed, and had one seen her there on foot in the morning, one would have surmised that she was out shopping, and looked for the carriage which would probably have been following her; but a lady, striking in appearance and of distinguished bearing, alighted composedly from an omnibus at Piccadilly Circus between nine and ten at night, and calmly taking her way alone up Regent Street was a sight which would have struck one as being anomalous even if she had been a stranger. But this lady was no stranger to me. I should have recognized her figure and carriage had her countenance been concealed. I had turned hot and cold at the first foreshadowing of her presence, and would fain have found myself mistaken, but there was no possibility of a doubt. She passed me without haste, and so close that I could have laid my hand upon her shoulder. But I let her go in sheer astonishment. What, in the name of all that is inexplicable, was Evadne doing there alone at that time of night? Such a proceeding was hardly decent, whatever her excuse, and it was certainly not safe. This last reflection aroused me, and I started instantly to follow her, intending to overtake her, and impose my escort upon her. She was out of sight, because she had turned the corner, but she could not have gone far, and I hurried headlong after her, nearly upsetting a man who met me face to face as I doubled into Regent Street. It was Colonel Colquhoun himself, in a joyful mood evidently, and for once I could have blessed his blinding potations. He recognized me, but had apparently passed Evadne.

"Ah, me boy, you here!" he exclaimed, with an assumption of facetious *bonhomie* particularly distasteful to me. "All the world lives in London, I think! It's where you'll always come across anyone you want. Sly dog! Following a lady, I'll be bound! By Jove! I wouldn't have thought it of

you, Galbraith! But you'll not find anything choice in Regent Street. Come with me, and I'll introduce you——"

"Excuse me," I interrupted, and hurried away from the brute. How had he missed Evadne? Perhaps he was looking the other way. But what a position for her to be in. Supposing he had recognized her, my being so close would have made it none the better for her. And could I be sure that he had not seen her? I did not think he was the kind of man, with all his faults, to lay a trap even for an enemy whom he suspected; but, still, one never knows.

Evadne was far ahead by this time, but the places of amusement were still open, and therefore there were few people in Regent Street. It is not particularly well lighted, but I was soon near enough to make her out by her graceful dignified carriage, which contrasted markedly with that of every other woman and girl I saw. In any other place her bearing would have struck me as that of a person accustomed to consideration, even if I had not known her; but here, judging by the confident way she held her head up, I should have been inclined to set her down either as a most abandoned person, or as one who was quite unconscious of anything peculiar in her present proceedings. In another respect, too, she was very unlike the women and girls who were loitering about the street, peering up anxiously into the face of every man they met. Evadne seemed to see no one, and passed on her way, superbly indifferent to any attention she might be attracting. The distance between us had lessened considerably, and I could now have overtaken her easily, but I hesitated. I could not decide whether it would be better to join her, or merely to keep her in sight for her own safety. I was inclined to blame her severely for her recklessness. She had already passed her husband, and might meet half the depôt, or be recognized by Heaven knows who, before she got to the top of the street; and, as it was, she was attracting considerable attention. Scarcely a man met her who did not turn when he had passed, and look after her; and anyone of these might be an acquaintance. My impulse had been to insist upon her getting into a hansom, and allowing me to see her safe home; but it had occurred to me, upon reflection, that I might compromise her more fatally by being seen with her under such circumstances than could happen if she went alone.

While I hesitated, a tall thin man with a gray beard, whom I thought I recognized from photographs seen in shop windows,

met her, stared hard as he passed, stood a minute looking after her, and then turned and followed her. If he were the man I took him to be, he would probably know her, and my first impression was that he did so, and had recognised her, and been, like myself, too astonished to speak. If so, he quickly recovered himself, and, as he evidently intended to address her now, I was half inclined to resign my responsibility to him. Then I thought that if I joined her also nothing could be said. Two men of known repute may escort a lady anywhere and at any time. I quickened my steps, but purposely let him speak first.

Coming up with her from behind, he began in a tone which was more caressing than respectful. "It is a fine night," he said.

Evadne started visibly, looked at him, and shrank two steps away; but she answered, in a voice which I could hardly recognise as hers, it was so high and strident: "I should call it a chilly night," she said.

"Well, yes, perhaps," he answered, "for the time of the year. Are you going for a walk?"

"I—I don't know," she replied, looking doubtfully on ahead.

She was walking at a pretty rapid rate as it was, and her elderly interlocutor had some difficulty in keeping up with her.

"Perhaps if we turned down one of these side streets to the left, it would be quieter, and we could talk," he suggested.

"I don't think I want either to be quiet or to talk," she said, suddenly recovering her natural voice and tone.

"Well, what do you want, then?" he asked.

She looked up at him, and slackened her speed. "Perhaps, since you are so good as to trouble yourself about me at all," she said, "I may venture to ask if you will kindly tell me where in London I am?"

His manner instantly changed. "You are in Regent Street," he answered.

"And that lighted place behind us, where the crowd is—what is that?"

"You must mean Piccadilly Circus."

"And if I walk on what shall I come to?"

"Oxford Street. You don't seem to know London. Don't you live here?"

"I do not live in London."

"You have lost your way, perhaps; can I direct you anywhere?"

"No, thank you," she answered. "I can get into a hansom, you know, when I am tired of this."

"If I might venture to advise, I should say do so at once," he rejoined, slightly raising his hat as he spoke, and then he slipped behind her, and furtively hurried across the street, a considerably perplexed man, I fancied, and, judging by the way he peered to right and left as he went, one who was suffering from some sudden dislike to being recognised.

Evadne paid as little heed to his departure as she had done to his approach. A few steps farther brought her to a stand of hansom cabs. She hesitated a moment, and then got into one. I took the next, and directed the driver to follow her, being determined either to see her back to her friends, or to interfere if I found that she meant to continue her ramble. Her driver struck into Piccadilly at the next turn, and then drove steadily west for about half an hour. By that time we had come to a row of handsome houses, at one of which he stopped, and my man stoped also at an intelligent distance behind, but Evadne never looked back. She got out and ascended the steps with the leisurely air peculiar to her. The door was opened as soon as she rang, and she entered. A moment later a footman came out on to the pavement and paid the driver, with whom he exchanged a remark or two. As he returned, the light from the hall streamed out upon him, and I saw, with a sense of relief which made me realise what the previous tension had been, that he wore the Hamilton-Wells livery, and then I recognised the Hamilton-Wells' town house. The driver of the now empty hansom turned his horse, and walked him slowly back in the direction from which he had come. The incident was over; but what did it all mean? The whole thing seemed so purposeless. What had taken her out at all? Was it some jealous freak? Women have confessed to me that they watch their husbands habitually. One said she did it for love of excitement: there was always a risk of being caught, and nothing else ever amused her half so much. Another declared she did it because she could not afford to employ a private detective, and she wanted to have evidence always ready in case it should suit her to part from her husband at any time. Another said she loved her husband, and it hurt her less to know than to suspect. But I could not really believe that Evadne would do such a thing for any reason whatever. She was fearlessly upright and honest about her actions; and her self-respect would have restrained her if

ever an isolated impulse had impelled her to such a proceeding. But still——

"Will you wait until the lady returns, sir?" the driver asked at last, peeping down upon me through the trap in the roof. If he had not spoken I might have sat there half the night, puzzling out the problem. Now, however, that he had roused me, I determined to leave it for the present. I remembered my duty to the friend with whom I was staying, and hurried back, resolving to go to Evadne herself next day, and ask her point blank to explain. I believed she would do so, for in all that concerned her own pursuits—the doings of the day—I had always found her almost curiously frank. After this wise determination, I ought to have been philosopher enough to sleep upon the matter, but her ladyship's escapade cost me my night's rest, and took me to her early next morning, in an angry and irritable mood.

I sent up my card, and Evadne received me at once in Lady Adeline's boudoir.

"This is an unexpected pleasure," she said. "How did you know I was in town?"

"I saw you in Regent Street last night," I answered bluntly. "What were you doing there?"

"What were you doing there yourself?" she said.

The question took me aback completely, and the more so as it was asked with an unmistakable flash of merriment.

"Answer me my question first," I said. "You could have no business out alone in London at that time of night, laying yourself open to insult."

"I don't recognise your right to question me at all," she answered, unabashed.

"I have the right of any gentleman who does his duty when he sees a lady making——"

"A fool of herself? Thanks," she said, laughing. "The privilege of protecting a woman, of saving her even in spite of herself from the effects of her own indiscretion, is one of which a man seldom avails himself, and I did not understand you at first. Excuse me. But how do you know I could have no business out at that time of night? Do you imagine that you know all my duties in life?"

I was bewildered by her confidence—by her levity, I may say, but I persisted.

"I cannot believe that you had any business or duty which necessitated your being in a disreputable part of London alone

late at night," I said. "But I hope you will allow me the right of an intimate friend to warn you if you run risks—in your ignorance."

"Or to reprove me if I do so with my eyes open?" she suggested.

"To ask for an explanation, at all events, if I do not understand what your motive could be."

"You are very kind," she said. "You want me to excuse myself if I can, otherwise you will be forced to suspect something unjustifiable."

"That is the literal truth," I answered.

She laughed. "But you have not answered *my* question," she said. "What were you doing there yourself?"

"I had been dining at the Charing Cross Hotel with a friend who had just returned from India," I told her, "and I was walking back to the house of the friend with whom I am staying. He lives in a street off Piccadilly."

"But what were you doing in Regent Street?"

"Following you."

She laughed again. "Did you see that old man speak to me?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Horrid old creature, is he not? He gave me such a start! Did you recognise him?"

"Yes."

"I did not at first, but when I did, I thought I would make him useful." She meditated for a little, then she said: "It did me good."

"What?" I asked.

"That start," she replied. "It quite roused me. But, now, tell me. I should never have supposed that you had no business anywhere at any time; why are you not equally charitable?"

I was silent.

"Tell me what you think took me there?"

"An unholy curiosity," I blurted out.

"That is an unholy inspiration which has only just occurred to you, and you cannot entertain the suspicion for a moment," she said.

This was true.

"But, after all," she pursued, "what business have you to take me to task like this? It is not a professional matter."

"I don't know that," I answered. This was another inspi-

ration, and it disconcerted her, for she changed countenance.

"You have a nice opinion of me!" she exclaimed.

"I have the highest opinion of you," I answered, "and nobody knows that better than yourself. But what am I to think when I find you acting without any discretion whatever?"

"Think that I am at the mercy of every wayward impulse."

"But I know that you are not," I replied; "and I am unhappy about you. Will you trust me? Will you explain? Will you let me help you if I can? I believe there is some trouble at the bottom of this business. Do tell me all about it?"

"Well, I *will* explain," she said, still laughing. "I was driving past, and seeing you there, I thought I would horrify you, so I stopped the carriage——"

"You got out of an omnibus!" I exclaimed.

"Well, that was my carriage for the time being," she answered, in no way disconcerted. "You do not expect me to own that I was in an omnibus, do you?"

"I wish you would be serious for a moment," I remonstrated. "I wish you would tell me the truth."

"As I always do tell the truth if I tell anything, I think we had better let the subject drop," she said, with a sigh, as if she were tired of it.

"You mean you cannot tell me?"

"That is what I mean."

I reflected for a moment. "Does Lady Adeline know that you were out last night?" I asked.

"No," she replied. "She was out herself and I returned before she did.

"Then you have not told her either?"

She shook her head.

"I would really rather you confided in her than in me, if you can."

"Thank you," she answered drily.

"Can you?" I persisted.

"No, I cannot," was the positive rejoinder.

I rose to go. "Forgive my officiousness," I said. "I ventured to hope you would make use of me, but I am afraid I have been forcing my services upon you too persistently."

She rose impulsively, and held out both hands to me. "I wish I could thank you," she said, looking up at me frankly and affectionately. "I wish I could tell you how much I

appreciate your goodness to me, and all your disinterestedness. I wish I deserved it!" She clasped my hands warmly as she spoke, then dropped them; and instantly I became conscious of an indescribable sense of relief; and prepared to depart at once; but she stopped me again with a word as I opened the door.

"Dr. Galbraith," she began, with another flash of merriment, "tell me, you *were* horrified, now, were you not?"

I jammed my hat on my head and left her. I did not mean to slam the door, but her levity had annoyed me. I fancied her laughing as I descended the stairs, and wondered at her mood, and yet I was re-assured by it. She would not have been so merry if there had been anything really wrong, and it was just possible that the half explanation she had given me and withdrawn was the true one. She might have been in an omnibus for once for some quite legitimate reason, and while it waited at Piccadilly Circus she might have seen me as she had described, and got out in a moment of mischief to astonish me. If that were her object, she had certainly succeeded, and it seemed to me more likely than that she should just have gone and returned for the sake of doing an unusual thing, which was the only other explanation that occurred to me.

I saw Lady Adeline before I left the house, and found that Colonel Colquhoun was not staying with them, nor did she seem to know that he had been in town.

CHAPTER XII.

A CRUEL misfortune robbed me of a near relation at this time, and added the rank of baronet, with a considerable increase of fortune, to my other responsibilities. The increase of fortune was welcome in one way, as it enabled me to enlarge a small private hospital which I had established on my Fountain Towers estate, for the benefit of poor patients. Attending to these, and to the buildings which were at once put in progress, was the one absorbing interest of my life at that time.

During the next three months I only called once on Evadne, and that was a mere formal visit which I felt in duty bound to pay her. I did not drive past the house, either, oftener than I could help, but when I was obliged to go that way I

saw her, sitting sewing in her accustomed place, and she would smile and bow to me—brightly at first, but after a time with a wistful, weary expression, or I fancied so. It was of necessity a hurried glimpse that I had, although my horse would slacken his speed of his own accord as we approached the holly hedge that bounded her bower; but I began to be uneasily aware of a change in her appearance. I might be mistaken, but I certainly thought her eyes looked unnaturally large, as if her cheeks had fallen away, and the little patient face was paler. In the early summer, when she was well, she had been wont to flush upon the least occasion, but now her colour did not vary, and I suspected that she was again shutting herself up too much. Mrs. Orton Beg was at Fraylingay, Diavolo was keeping his grandfather company at Morne, the Kilroys were in town, the Hamilton-Wellses had gone to Egypt, and Colonel Colquhoun had taken two months' leave and gone abroad also, so that she had no one near her for whom she had any special regard. Colonel Colquhoun had called on me before he left, and told me he was sure Evadne would hope to see a good deal of me during his absence, and he wished I would look after her—professionally, I inferred, and of course I was always prepared to do so. But, so far, she had not required my services, happily, and for the rest—well, my time was fully occupied, and I found it did not suit me to go to As-You-Like-It. When I noticed the change in her appearance, however, I began to think I would look in some day, just to see how she really was, but before I could carry out the half formed intention she came to me. It was during my consulting hours, and I was sitting at my writing table, seeing my patients in rotation, when her name was announced. She sauntered in in her usual leisurely way, shook hands with me, and then subsided into the easy-chair on my right, which was placed facing the window for my patients to occupy.

"I have a cold," she said, "and a pain under my right clavicle, and the posterior lobe of my brain—oh, dear, I have forgotten it all!" she broke off, laughing. "How *shall* I make you understand?"

"You are in excellent spirits," I observed, "if you are not in very good health."

"No, believe me," she answered. "The pleasure of seeing you again enlivened me for a moment; but I am really rather down."

I had been considering her attentively from a professional point of view while she was speaking, and saw that this was true. The brightness which animated her when she entered faded immediately, and then I saw that her face was thin and pale and anxious in expression. Her eyes wandered somewhat restlessly; her attitude betokened weakness. She had a little worrying cough, and her pulse was unequal.

"What have you been doing with yourself lately?" I asked, turning to my writing table and taking up a pen, when I had ascertained this last fact.

"Dreaming," she said.

The answer struck me. "Dreaming," I repeated to myself, and then aloud to her, while I affected to write. "Dreaming?" I said. "What about, for example?"

"Oh! the Arabian Nights, the whole thousand and one of them, would not be long enough to tell you," she replied. "I think my dreams have lasted longer already."

"Are you speaking of day-dreams?" I asked.

"Yes."

"You imagine things as you sit at work, perhaps!"

"Yes." She spoke languidly, and evidently attached no special significance either to my questions or her own answers, which was what I wished. "Yes, that is my best time. While I work, I live in a world of my own creating; in a beautiful happy dream—at least it was so once," she added, with a sigh.

"I have heard you say you did not care to read fiction. You prefer to make your own stories, is that the reason?"

"I suppose so," she said; "but I never thought of it before."

"And you never write these imaginings?"

"Oh, no! That would be impossible. It is in the tones of voices as I hear them; in the expression of faces as I see them; in the subtle, indescribable perception of the significance of events, and their intimate relation to each other and influence on the lives of my dream friends that the whole charm lies. Such impressions are too delicate for reproduction, even if I had the mind to try. Describing them would be as coarse a proceeding as eating a flower after inhaling its perfume."

"Did I understand you to say that this is the habit of years? Has your inner life been composed of dreams ever since you were a child?"

"No," she replied. "I don't think as a child I was at all imaginative. I liked to learn, and when I was not learning I lived an active, outdoor life."

"Ah! Then you have acquired the habit since you grew up?"

"Yes. It came on by degrees. I used to think of how things might be different; that was the way it began. I tried to work out schemes of life in my head, as I would do a game of chess; not schemes of life for myself, you know, but such as should save other people from being very miserable. I wanted to do some good in the world,"—she paused here to choose her words—"and that kind of thought naturally resolves itself into action, but before the impulse to act came upon me I had made it impossible for myself to do anything, so that when it came I was obliged to resist it, and then, instead of reading and reflecting, I took to sewing for a sedative, and turned the trick of thinking how things might be different into another channel."

She was unconsciousiy telling me the history of her married life, showing me a lonely woman gradually losing her mental health for want of active occupation and a wholesome share of the work of the world to take her out of herself. To a certain extent, then, I had been right in my judgment of her character. Her disposition was practical, not contemplative; but she had been forced into the latter attitude, and the consequence was, perhaps—well, it might be a diseased state of the mind; but that I had yet to ascertain.

"And are you happy in your dreams?" I inquired.

"I was," she said; "but my dreams are not what they used to be."

"How?" I asked.

"At first they were pleasant," she answered. "When I sat alone at work, it was my happiest time. I was master of my dreams then, and let none but pleasant shapes present themselves. But by degrees—I don't know how—I began to be intoxicated. My imagination ran away with me. Instead of indulging in a daydream now and then, when I liked, all my life became absorbed in delicious imaginings, whether I would or not. Working, walking, driving; in church; anywhere and at any time, when I could be alone a moment, I lived in my world apart. If people spoke to me, I awoke and answered them; but real life was a dull thing to offer, and the daylight very dim, compared with the movement and bright-

ness of the land I lived in—while I was master of my dreams."

"Then you did not remain master of them always?"

"No. By degrees they mastered me; and now I am their puppet, and they are demons that torment me. When I awake in the morning, I wonder what the haunting thought for the day will be; and before I have finished dressing it is upon me as a rule. At first it was not incessant, but now the trouble in my head is awful."

I thought so! But she had said enough for the present. The confession was ingenuously made, and evidently without intention. I merely asked a few more questions about her general health, and then sent her home to nurse her cold, promising to call and see how it was the next day.

When I opened my case book to make a note of her visit and a brief summary of the symptoms she had described and betrayed, I hesitated a moment about the diagnosis, and finally decided to write provisionally for my guidance, or rather by way of prognosis, the one word, "Hysteria!"

CHAPTER XIII.

NEXT day I found that Evadne's cold was decidedly worse, and as the weather was severe I ordered her to stay in her own rooms.

"Am I going to be ill?" she asked.

"No," I answered, pooh-poohing the notion.

"Doctor, you dash my hopes!" she said. "I am always happy when I am ill. It *is* such a relief."

I had heard her use the phrase twice before, but it was only now that I saw her meaning. Physical suffering was evidently a relief from the mental misery, and this proved that the trouble was of longer standing than I had at first suspected. She had used the same expression, I remembered, when I first attended her, during that severe attack of pneumonia.

Colonel Colquhoun had returned, she told me, but I did not see him that day, as he was out. Next morning, however, I came earlier on purpose, and encountered him in the hall. He was not in uniform, I was thankful to see, for he was very apt to assume his orderly room manners therewith, and they were decidedly objectionable to the average civilian, whatever military men might think of them.

"Ah, how do you do?" he said. "So you've been having honours thrust upon you? Well, I congratulate you, I'm sure, sincerely, in so far as they are a pleasure to you; but I condole with you from the bottom of my heart for your loss. I'm afraid Mrs. Colquhoun is giving you more trouble. Now, don't say the trouble's a pleasure, for I'll not believe a word of it, with all you have to occupy you."

"It is no pleasure to see her ill," I answered. "How is she to-day?"

"On my word I can't tell you, because I haven't seen her. I haven't the *entrée* to her private apartments. But come and see my new horse," he broke off—he was in an exceedingly good humour—"I got him in Ireland, and I'm inclined to think him a beauty, but I'd like to have your opinion. It's worth having."

The horse was like Colonel Colquhoun himself, showy; one of those high steppers that put their feet down where they lift them up almost, and get over no ground at all to speak of. Having occupied, without compunction, in inspecting this animal, half an hour of the time he considered too precious to be wasted on his wife, Colonel Colquhoun summoned Evadne's maid to show me upstairs, and cheerfully went his way.

But that remark of his about the *entrée* to his wife's apartments had made an impression. I was in duty bound to follow up any clue to the cause of her present state of mind, and here was perhaps a morbid symptom.

"Why have you quarrelled with your husband?" I asked in my most matter-of-course tone, as soon as I was seated, and had heard about her cold.

"I have not quarrelled with my husband," she answered, evidently surprised.

"Then what does he mean by saying that he hasn't the *entrée* to your private apartments?"

"I am sure he made no complaint about that," she answered tranquilly.

This was true. He had merely mentioned the fact casually, and not as a thing that affected his comfort or happiness in any way.

"Colonel Colquhoun and I are better friends now, if anything, than we have ever been," she added of her own accord, with inquiry in her eyes, as if she wanted to know what could have made me think otherwise.

I should have said myself that they were excellent friends,

but what precisely did "friends" mean? I scented something anomalous here. However, it was not a point that I considered it advisable to pursue. I had ascertained that there was no morbid feeling in the matter, and that was all that I required to know. I only paid her a short visit that morning, and did not return for two days; but I had been thinking seriously about her case in the interval, and carefully prepared to inquire into it particularly; and an evident increase of languor and depression gave me a good opening.

"Tell me how you are to-day," I began. "Any trouble?"

"The worry in my head is awful!" she exclaimed. "Let me go downstairs. I am better there."

She was essentially a child of light and air and movement, requiring sunshine indoors as well as out to keep her in health. An Italian proverb says where the sun does not come, the doctor does, and this had been only too true in her case. It was pure animal instinct which had made the west window of the drawing room her favourite place. Nature, animal and vegetable, is under an imperative law to seek the sun, and she had unconsciously obeyed it for her own good. But she required more than that transient gleam in the western window; a sun bath daily, when it could be had, is what I should have prescribed for her; and from her next remark I judged that she had discovered for herself the harm which the deprivation of light was doing her.

"I can see the sun all day long beyond the shadow of the house," she continued, "but I want to feel it, too. I would like it to shine on me in the early morning, and wake me up and warm me. There is no heat so grateful; and I only feel half alive in these dark, damp rooms. I never had bronchitis or was delicate at all in any way until we came here. Let me go down, won't you?"

"Well, as your cold is so much better, you may go downstairs if you like. But you mustn't go out," I answered. "How are you going to amuse yourself?"

"Oh!"—she looked around the room as if in search of something—"I don't know exactly. Work, I suppose."

"You don't read much?"

"No, not now," she answered, leaning forward with her hands clasped on her lap, and looking dreamily into the fire.

"Does that mean that you used to read once?" I pursued. "You have plenty of books here."

She looked toward the well-filled cases. "Yes," she said, "old friends. I seldom open any of them now."

"Do you never feel that they reproach you for losing interest in them?"

She smiled. "I think perhaps they are relieved because I have ceased from troubling them—from requiring more of them than they could give me," she answered, smothering a sigh.

"May I look at them?" I asked, anticipating her permission by rising and going toward them.

"Yes; certainly," she answered, rising herself, and following me languidly. The books were arranged in groups—science, history, biography, travels, poetry, fiction; with bound volumes of such periodicals as the *Contemporary Review*, *The Nineteenth Century*, and the *Westminster*. I read the titles of the volumes in the science divisions with surprise, for she had never betrayed, nor had I ever suspected, that she had added the incident of learning to the accident of brains. But if she knew the contents of but half of these books well she must be a highly educated woman. I took out several to see how they had been read, and found them all carefully annotated, with marginal notes very clearly written, and containing apposite quotations from and references to the best authorities on the various subjects. This was especially the case with books on the natural sciences; the physical ones having apparently interested her less.

"These are not very elegant books for a lady's boudoir," she said, referring to the plain dark bindings. "I dislike gorgeously bound books, and could never make a pet of one. They are like over-dressed people; all one's care is concentrated upon their appearance, and their real worth of character, if they have any, escapes one."

"Were you ever an omnivorous reader?" I asked.

"No, I am thankful to say," she answered, her natural aptitude for intellectual pursuits overcoming her artificial objection to them, as she looked at her books and became interested in them in spite of herself; "for I notice that the average reader who reads much remembers little, and is absurdly inaccurate. It is as bad to read everything as to eat everything; the mind, when it is gorged with a surfeit of subjects, retains none of them."

She had a fairly representative collection of French, Italian, and German books, all equally well-read and annotated, each

in its own language, the French and Italian being excellent, but the German imperfect, although, as she told me, she liked both the language and the literature very much the best of the three. "German suggested ideas to me," she said, "and that is why I paid less attention to the construction of the language, I think. But I am afraid you will find no elegancies in any tongue I use, for language has always been to me a vehicle of thought, and not a part of art to be employed with striking effect. Now, here is Carlyle, the arch phrasemaker. I always admired him more than I loved him; but his books are excellent for intellectual exercise. He forced those phrases from his brain with infinite pains, and, when you take them collectively, you find yourself obliged to force them into yours in like manner."

She had become all interest and animation by this time, and I had never known her so delightful as she was that morning while showing me her books. She had no objection to lending me any that I chose, although I told her that I only wanted them to read her notes. I took a variety, but found no morbid tendency in any remark she had made upon them.

I paid my visit late in the afternoon next day, and found Evadne in the drawing room. She was standing in the window when I entered, but came down the room to greet me.

"I have been watching for you," she said. "I hoped you would come early. And I have also been watching that party of jubilant ducks waddling down the road. Come and see them. I believe they belong to us. They must have escaped from the yard. But aren't they enjoying the ramble! That old drake is quite puffed up with excitement and importance! He goes along nodding his head, and saying again and again to the ducks: 'Now, didn't I tell you so! and aren't you glad you took my advice and came?' And all the ducks are smiling and complimenting him upon his wisdom and courage. They ought to be driven back, but I haven't the heart to spoil their pleasure just yet by informing against them."

I was standing beside her in the window now, and she looked up at me, smiling as she spoke. She was brighter under the immediate influence even of the watery winter sun, now a red ball, glowing behind the brown branches of the leafless trees, than she had been in her gloomy north room; and I took this lively interest in the adventurous ducks to be a glimpse of the joyous, healthy mind, seeing character in all

things animate, and gifted with sympathy as well as insight, which must naturally have been hers.

"When am I to go out?" she asked. "I begin to long for a sight of my fellow-creatures. I don't want to speak to them. I only want to see them. But I am sociable to that extent—when I am in my right mind."

"Tell me about this mental malady," I begged.

"Ah," she began, laughing up at me, but with a touch of bitterness. "I interest you now! I am a case! You do not flatter me. But I mean to give you every help in my power. If only you could cure me!" She clasped her hands and held them out to me, the gesture of an instant, but full of earnest entreaty.

"Come from the window," I said. "It is chilly here."

"Yes, come to the fire," she rejoined, leading the way; "and sit down, and let us have tea, and talk, and be cosey. You want me to talk about myself, and I will if I can. I was happy just now, but you see I am depressed in a moment. It is misery to me to be so variable. And I constantly feel as if I wanted something—to be somewhere, or to have something; I don't know where or what; it is a sort of general dissatisfaction, but it is all the worse for not being positive. If I knew what I wanted, I should be cured by the effort to obtain it."

She rang the bell, and began to make up the fire; and I sat down and watched her because she liked to do those things in her own house. "Strangers wait upon me," she said; "but my friends allow me to wait upon them."

When the servant had brought tea and retired, she began again.

"Now question me," she said, "and make me tell you the truth."

"I am sure you will tell me the truth," I asserted.

"I am sure I shall try," she replied; "but I am not so sure that I shall succeed. If you provoke me, I shall fence with you; if you confuse me, I shall unwittingly say 'yes' when I mean 'no.' In fact, I am surprised to find myself confiding this trouble to you at all! It has come about by accident, but I am very glad; it is such a relief to speak. But how *has* it come about?" she broke off. "Did you suspect?"

"Suspect what?"

"That I am insane."

"You are not insane," I answered harshly.

She looked at me as if my words or manner amused her. "I remember now," she said. "I complained of the worry in my head, and then you questioned me."

"It is not an uncommon complaint," I rejoined.

"Is it not?" she answered. "Well, I don't know whether to be sorry for the other sufferers, or relieved to think that I am not the only one, which is what you intend, I believe. But, doctor, the misery is terrible, especially now that it has become almost incessant. It drives me—fills my mind with such dreadful ideas. I have actually meditated murder lately."

"Murder in the abstract, I suppose?"

"No, murder actually, murder for my own benefit, or what I fancy in that mood would be for my benefit; the murder of one poor miserable creature whom I pity with all my heart and really care for—when I am in my right mind."

My heart sank. It was not necessary for me to know, and I had no inclination to ask, who the "one poor miserable creature" was.

"And when the impulse is on you, what do you do?" I said.

"It is not an impulse exactly," she answered; "at least, it is nothing which I have ever had the slightest inclination to act upon. I am just possessed by the idea—whatever it may be—and then I cannot sit still. I have to rush out."

"Into Regent Street, for example?" I suggested, her last remark having thrown a sudden side-light upon that occurrence.

"Yes," she said. "But I didn't know I was going to Regent Street. I had read of Dickens prowling about the streets of London late at night when he was suffering from the effects of overwork, and recovering his tranquillity and power in that way, and I thought I would try the experiment; so I went out and just walked on until I was tired, and then I got into an omnibus, so as to be with the people, and when it stopped and they all got out, I got out too, and walked on again, and then that horrid old man spoke to me. It was a great shock, but it had the happiest effect. I woke up, as it were, the moment I got rid of him, and felt quite myself again; and then I hurried back, as you know. You still disapprove? Well, in one way, perhaps you are right; but still 'it did me good.' She stopped, and looked into the fire

thoughtfully; and then she smiled. "Forgive me, do!" she said. "I know I behaved badly next day; I could not help it. The sudden relief to my mind had sent my spirits up inordinately for one thing; and then your face! Your consternation was really comical! If I had injured you irreparably in your estimation of the value of your own opinion of people, you could not have cared more. But I am sorry, very, very sorry," she added, with feeling, "that you should have lost your respect for me."

"What could make you think that I had lost my respect for you?" I asked in surprise.

"Because, you know, you have never come to see me since as you used to do." She looked at me a moment wistfully, and I knew she half expected me to explain or make some excuse; but I could not, unfortunately, do either without making bad worse. I could assure her, however, honestly, that I had not lost my respect for her.

"And I came to see you when you required me," I added.

But she was not satisfied. "I know your philanthropy," she said. "But I would rather have you come as of old because you believed in me, and like and respect me. I value your friendship, and it pains me to find that you can only treat me now like any other suffering sinner. Is it going to be so always?"

("Will the child kill me with her innocent talk?")

She had not alluded to the discontinuance of my visits before. I thought she had not missed me, and, being in a double mood, had been somewhat hurt by the seeming indifference, although I would not have had her want me when I could not come. Now, however, I was greatly distressed to find the construction she had put upon my absence, and all the more so because I could not explain.

"Do not say that!" I exclaimed. "You have always had, you always will have, my most sincere respect. It is part of an unhealthy state of mind which makes you doubt the attachment of your friends."

She was glad to accept this assertion. "Ah, yes!" she said. "I know the symptoms, but I had forgotten for the moment. Thank you. I *am* so glad to see you again!" She sighed, leaned back in her chair, folded her hands on her lap, and looked at me—"if only as a doctor," she added

slowly. "You have some mysterious power over my mind. All great doctors have the power I mean; I wonder what it is. Your very presence restores me in an extraordinary way. You dispel the worry in my head without a word, by just being here, however bad it is. I used to long for you so on those days when you never came, and I used to watch for you and be disappointed when you drove past; but then I always said, 'He will come to-morrow,' and that was something to look forward to. I used to think at first you would get over my escapade, or learn to take another view of it; but then, when you never came, I gradually lost heart and hope, and that is how it was I broke down, I think."

This guileless confidence affected me painfully.

"But I want to discover the secret of a great doctor's success," she pursued. "What is your charm? There is something mesmeric about you, I think, something inimical to disease at all events. There is healing in your touch, and your very manners make an impression which cures."

"Knowledge, I suppose, has nothing to do with it?" I suggested, smiling.

"No, nothing," she answered emphatically. "I have carried out directions of yours successfully which had been previously given to me by another doctor and tried by me without effect. You alter the attitude of one's mind somehow—that is how you do it, I believe."

"Well, I hope to alter the present attitude of your mind completely," I answered. "And to resume. I want you to tell me how you feel when one of those tormenting thoughts has passed. Do you suffer remorse for having entertained it?"

"Only an occasional pang," she said. "I do not allow myself to sorrow or suffer for thoughts which I cannot control. I am suffering from a morbid state of mind, and it is my duty to fight against the impulses which it engenders. But my responsibility begins and ends with the struggle. And I am quite sure that it is wiser to try and forget that such ideas ever were than to encourage them to haunt me by recollecting them even for purposes of penitential remorse."

"And when it is not a criminal impulse that affects you——"

"*Criminal!*" she ejaculated, aghast at the word.

I had used it on purpose to see its effect upon her, and was satisfied. The moral consciousness was still intact.

"Yes," I persisted. "But when it is not an impulse of that kind, what is it that disturbs your mind?"

"Thoughts of the suffering, the awful, needless suffering that there is in the world. The perception of it is a spur which goads me at times so that I feel as if I could do almost anything to lessen the sum of it. But then, you see, my hands are tied, so that all I can do is think, think, think."

"We must change that to work, work, work," I said.

"It is too late," she answered despondently. "Body and mind have suffered—mind and body. All that is not wrong in me is weak. I would have it otherwise, yes. But give me some anodyne to relieve the pain; that is all you can do for me now."

"I will give you no anodyne, either actual or figurative," I answered, rising to go. "If you had no recuperative force left in you there would be less energy in your despair. It rests with yourself now entirely to be as healthy-minded as ever again if you like."

I never could remember whether I said good-bye to her that day, or just walked out of the room, like the forgetful boor I sometimes am, with the words on my lips.

CHAPTER XIV.

A MEDICAL man who does not keep his moral responsibility before him in the consideration of a case must be a very indifferent practitioner, and, with regard to Evadne, I felt mine to such an extent that, before the interview was over, I had decided that I was not the proper person to treat her. I doubted my judgment for one thing, which showed that for once my nerve was at fault; and I had other reasons which it is not necessary to give. I therefore determined to run up to town to consult Sir Shadwell Rock about her. He was a distinguished colleague and personal friend of mine, a man of vast experience, and many years my senior; and I knew that if he would treat her, she could not be in better hands.

When I left As-You-Like-It I found that I had just time to drive to Morningquest and catch the last train to town. It was a four hours' journey, but fortunately there was a train in the early morning which would bring me back in time for my own work.

I knew Sir Shadwell was in town, and telegraphed to him to beg him to see me that night at half-past eleven if he possibly could, and, on arriving, I found him at home—very much at home, indeed, in a smoking jacket and slippers over a big fire in his own private sanctum, enjoying his bachelor ease with a cigarette and the last shilling shocker.

I apologised for my untimely visit, but he put me at my ease at once by cordially assuring me that I had done him a favour. "I was going to a boring big dinner this evening when your telegram arrived, and your coming in this way suggested something sufficiently important to detain me, so I sent an excuse, and have had a wholesome chop, and—eh—*a real good time*," he added confidentially, tapping the novelette. "Extraordinary production this, really. Most entertaining. I can't guess who did it, you know, I can't indeed—but, my dear boy, to what do I owe the pleasure? What can I do for you?

"First of all give me a wholesome chop if you have another in the house, for I'm famishing."

"Oh, a thousand pardons for my remissness!" he exclaimed, ringing the bell vehemently. "Of course you haven't dined. I ought to have thought of that. Something very important, I suppose?"

"A most interesting case."

"Mental?"

"Yes. A lady."

"Well, not another word until you've had something to eat. Suitable surroundings play an important part in the discussion of such cases, and suitable times and seasons also. Just before dinner one isn't sanguine, and just after one is too much so. When you have eaten, take time to reflect—and a cigarette if you are a smoker." He had been holding his book in his hand all the time, but now he pottered to a side-table with an old man's stiffness, peeped at the paragraph he had been reading, marked his place with a paper cutter, and muttered—"Very strange, for if she didn't steal the jewels, who did? Mustn't dip though; spoils it." He put the book down, and returned to me, taking off his spectacles as he came, and smoothing his thick white hair. "Now don't say a word if you've read it," he cautioned me. "I always owe everybody a grudge who tells me the plot of a story I'm interested in. But, let me see, what was I saying? Oh! Take time, that was it! There is nothing like letting yourself settle if you are at all perplexed. When the memory is

crowded with details the mind becomes muddy, and you must let it clear itself. That is the secret of my own success. In any difficulty I have always waited. Don't try to think. Much better dismiss the matter from your mind altogether, make yourself comfortable in the easiest chair in the room, get a rousing book—the subject is of no importance, so long as it interests you—and in half an hour, if the physical well-being is satisfactory, you will find the mental tension gradually relax. Your ideas begin to flow, your judgment becomes clear, and you suddenly see for yourself in a way that astonishes you."

"Then pray oblige me by resuming your seat and cigarette," I answered, "and let me transfer my difficulty to you while the moment lasts—*your* moment!"

"When you have dined," he said good-humouredly. "I won't hear a word while you are famishing. Tell me how you are yourself, and what you are doing. My dear boy, it is really a pleasure to see you! Why aren't you married?"

"Now, really, do you expect me to answer such an important question as that with my mind in its present muddy condition!" I retorted upon him. "My many reasons are all rioting in my recollection, and I can't see one clearly."

The old gentleman smiled, and sat patting the arms of his chair for a little. "You're looking fagged," he remarked presently. "Work won't hurt you, but beware of worry!"

My dinner was brought to me on a tray at this instant, and the dear old man got up to see that it was properly served. He tried the champagne himself, to be sure it was right, and gave careful directions about the coffee. His interest in everything was as fresh as a boy's, and nothing he could do in the way of kindness was ever a trouble to him.

"You have been coming out strong in defence of morality lately," I remarked, when I had dined. "You have somewhat startled the proprieties."

"Startled the pruderies, you mean," he answered, bridling. "The proprieties face any necessity for discussion with modest discretion, however painful it may be."

"Well, you've done some good, at all events," I answered. I did not tell him, but only that very day I had heard it said that his was a name which all women should reverence for what he had done for some of them.

"Well," he said, "the clergy have had a long innings. They have been hard at it for the last eighteen hundred years,

and society is still rotten at the core. It is our turn now. But come, draw up your chair to the fire and be comfortable. Well, yes," he went on, rubbing his hands, "I suppose eventually morality will be taught by medical men, and when it is much misery will be saved to the suffering sex. My own idea is that a woman is a human being; but the clerical theory is that she is a dangerous beast, to be kept in subjection, and used for domestic purposes only. Married life is made up to a great extent of the most heartless abuse of a woman's love and unselfishness. Submission, you know——!"

When I had given him the details of Evadne's case, so far as I had gone into it, he asked me what my own theory was.

"I feel sure it is the old story of these cases in women," I answered. "The natural bent has been thwarted to begin with."

"Yes," he commented, "that is a fruitful source of mischief even in these days, when women so often listen to the voice of the Lord himself speaking in their own hearts, and do what he directs in spite of the Church. The restrictions imposed upon women of ability warp their minds, and the rising generation suffers. But how has the natural bent been thwarted in this case?"

"I have not ascertained," I said. "She is a woman of remarkable general intelligence, but she makes no use of it, and she does not seem to have any one decided talent that she cares to cultivate, and consequently she has no absorbing interest to occupy her mind, no purpose for which to live and make the most of her abilities. She attends punctually to her social duties, but they do not suffice, and she has of necessity many spare hours of every day on her hands, during which she sits and sews alone. I suppose a woman's embroidery answers much the same purpose as a man's cigarette. It quiets her nerves, and helps her to think. If she is satisfied and happy in her surroundings her reflections will probably be tranquil and healthy, but if her outward circumstances are not congenial, she will banish all thoughts of them in her hours of ease, and her mind will gradually become a prey to vain imaginings—pleasant enough to begin with, doubtless, but likely to take a morbid tone at any time if her health suffers. This has been the case with Evadne——"

"With *whom?*" Sir Shadwell interrupted.

"With my patient," I stammered. "I have been accustomed to hear her spoken of by her Christian name."

"Humph!" the old gentleman grunted, enigmatically.

"She has one of those minds which should be occupied by a succession of lively events, all helping on some desirable object," I proceeded—"the mind of a naturally active woman."

"Well," he answered, "it seems to be another instance of the iniquitous folly of allowing the one sex to impose galling limitations upon the other. It is not an uncommon case so far as the mental symptoms go. How does she get on with her husband? does she contradict him?"

"No, never," I answered. "She is always courteous and considerate."

"Ah, now, I thought so," he chuckled. "A happily married woman contradicts her husband flatly whenever she thinks proper. She knows she is safe from wrangling and bitterness. I think you will find that the domestic position is the difficulty here. You don't seem to have inquired into that very carefully."

I made no answer, and he looked at me sharply for a moment, then asked me how old my patient was.

"Twenty-five," I told him.

"Twenty-five," he repeated; "and you are intimate with both her and her husband. Now, have you ever had any reason to doubt her honesty—her verbal honesty of course I mean?"

"Quite the contrary," I answered. "I have always found her almost peculiarly frank."

"A woman may be accurate, you know, in all she says of other people," he observed; "but that is no proof that she will be so concerning herself."

"I know," was my reply; "but I feel quite sure of this lady's word."

"And during the time that you have known her she now confesses that she has suffered more or less?"

"Yes. She mentioned one interval during which she said a new interest in life took her completely out of herself."

"What was the interest?"

"I did not ask her."

"She fell in love, I suppose, and you happened to know the fact."

"I neither know, nor suspected such a thing,"

"That was it, you may be sure," Sir Shadwell decided. "When a young and attractive woman, who speaks to her hus-

band with marked courtesy and consideration, instead of treating him familiarly, talks of having an interest in life which takes her completely out of herself, you may take it for granted almost always that the new interest is love."

"It is more likely to have been the small-pox epidemic," I rejoined, and then I gave him an account of that episode.

"Ah, well, perhaps," he said. "We are evidently dealing with a nature full of surprises." He pursed up his mouth and eyed me attentively. "My dear boy," he said at last, "I think I see your difficulty. You had better turn this case over to me altogether."

"Thank you," I answered. "That is what I should like to have suggested."

"Then send the lady up to town, and I will do my best for her."

CHAPTER XV.

SIR SHADWELL ROCK was exactly the kind of man Evadne had had in her mind, I felt sure, when she spoke of the peculiar influence which distinguished men of my profession exercise upon their patients. He was a man of taking manners to begin with, sympathetic, cultivated, humane; and, I need hardly add, scrupulously conscientious and exact. I could confide her to his care with the most perfect reliance upon his kindness, as well as upon his discretion and skill—if she would consent to consult him at all; but that was a little difficulty which had still to be got over. I anticipated some opposition, because I felt sure she had not realized that there was anything threatening to be serious in her case, and would therefore see no necessity for further advice. This made the arrangement difficult. It would not do to arouse any apprehension about her own state of mind; but how to induce her to go to London to consult an eminent specialist without doing so was the question. Had Lady Adeline been at home the suggestion would have come best from her, but in her absence there was nobody to make it except that impossible Colonel Colquhoun. If he chose to order Evadne to consult Sir Shadwell Rock, I knew she would do so at once, for she never opposed him, and he was so apt to be unreasonable and capricious that she would probably not think that the order signified much. But the further question was, would he give it? After I had finished my morning's work, I drove to the

depôt to see. The men were on parade when I entered the barrack square. They were drawn up in line, and the first thing I saw was Colonel Colquhoun himself prancing about on his charger, and not in the most amiable mood possible, I imagined, from the way he was blackguarding the men. He sat his horse well, and was a fine soldierlike man in uniform, and a handsome man too, of the martial order, when his bald head was hidden by his cocked hat, and his blond moustache had a chance; the sort of man to take a woman's fancy if not the kind of character to keep her regard.

An unhappy old mounted major had got into trouble just as I came up. His palfrey was an easy ambler, but he was the sort of old gentleman who would not have been safe in a rocking chair with his sword drawn and his chief complimenting him.

"You ride like a damned tailor, sir," Colonel Colquhoun was thundering at him just as I drove up.

An officer in undress uniform, Captain Bartlet, and Brigade Surgeon James, who was in mufti, were standing at an open window in the ante-room, and I joined them there, and looked out at the parade.

"I don't know how you fellows stand that kind of thing, and before the men, too," I remarked, *à propos* of a fresh volley of abuse from Colonel Colquhoun.

"Oh! by Jove! we've got to stand it, many of us, for weighty considerations quite apart from our personal dignity," Captain Bartlet rejoined. "A man with a wife and five children depending upon him will swallow a lot for their sake. It would be easy enough to answer him, but self-interest keeps us quiet—a deuced sight oftener than discipline, by the way. However," he added cheerfully, "all C. O.'s are not so bad as that brute out there, nor the half of them for the matter of that."

"But, still, it's a wonder what you stand, you combatants," Dr. James observed.

"Shut up, doctor," Captain Bartlet rejoined good-naturedly, "Don't presume upon your superior position. *Your* promotion doesn't depend upon the colonel's confidential report, nor your peace in life upon his fancy for you. You can disagree with him in your own line, but we can't in ours."

"Is Colonel Colquhoun often so?" I asked. He had just been assuring that unfortunate major that a billet in the Commissariat department, with a pound of beef on one spur

and a loaf of bread on the other to prevent accidents, was the thing for him.

"More or less," was the answer. "He's notorious all through the service. He brought his own regiment up to a high state of efficiency, I must say that for him, and led it into action like a man; but, between ourselves, I expect there's never been a time since he got his company when there wasn't a bullet ready for him. You remember, James, in India? of course it was an accident!"

The doctor nodded. "The men call him Bully Colquhoun," he supplemented.

"But surely his character is known at the Horse Guards?" I said.

"Ah, you see he's a smart officer," Captain Bartlet rejoined; "and what are officers for? To knock about and to be knocked about. Just look at him now! See how he's bucketing those men about! He was a militiaman, and that's a militiaman all over! A man who's been through Sandhurst has carried a rifle for a year himself, and he knows what it is, and gives his men their stand easy; but a militiaman has no more feeling for them than a block."

"Well, I can't see why you seniors don't remonstrate," I rejoined. "The War Office is bound to support you if you show good cause."

"Yes, and cashier you too for very little, if you make yourself obnoxious by giving them trouble," Bartlet replied. "Roylance was the only fellow that ever really stood up to Colquhoun. He was a young subaltern that had just joined, but an awful devil when he was roused, and he swore in the anteroom that if the colonel ever blackguarded him before the men, or anywhere else, or presumed upon his position to address him in terms which one gentleman is not permitted to use to another, he'd give him as much as he got. Well, the very next day, on parade, Roylance got the men into a muddle. Colquhoun's a good soldier, you know, and nothing riles him like inefficiency; and, by Jove! he was down on the lad like shot! He poured his whole vocabulary on him, and then, for want of a worse word, he called him 'a damned dissipated subaltern.' Well, Roylance just stepped back so as to make himself heard, and shouted coolly: 'Dissipated! that comes well from you, sir, considering the reason for the singular arrangement of your own *ménage!*' with which he handed his sword to the adjutant, and walked off to his quarters! You

should have seen Colquhoun's face! He went on leave immediately afterward, and of course the matter was hushed up. Roylance exchanged. He'd lots of money. It's the men without means that have to stand that kind of thing."

My voice was husky and I could scarcely control it, but I managed to ask: "What was the insinuation?"

"What, about Roylance? Just a lie! The lad's life was as clean as a lady's."

"I meant about the marriage?"

"Oh, don't you know? Colquhoun himself told us all about it in his cups one night. Just as they were starting on their wedding trip she got a letter containing certain allegations against him, and she gave him the slip at the station, and went off by herself to make inquiries, and in consequence of what she learnt, she declined to live with him at all at first. But he has a great horror of being made the subject of gossip, you know, and her people were also anxious to save scandal, and so, between them, they managed to persuade her just to consent to live in the house, he having given his word of honour as a gentleman not to molest her; and that has been the arrangement ever since. Funny, isn't it? 'Truth stranger than fiction,' you know, and that kind of thing, Yet it seems to answer. They're excellent friends."

The parade had been dismissed by this time, but I had changed my mind, and did not wait to see Colonel Colquhoun. I had to hurry back to make arrangements with regard to my patients in the hospital, and then I returned to town, and midnight saw me closeted once more with Sir Shadwell Rock.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE revolting story I had heard in the barracks haunted me. I had thought incessantly of my poor little lady taken out of the school room to face a position which would be horrifying, even in idea, to a right minded woman of the world. What the girl's mental sufferings must have been only a girl can tell. And ever since—the incubus of that elderly man of unclean antecedents! All that had been incomprehensible about Evadne was obvious now, and also the mistake she had made.

During the most important part of the time when a woman

is ripe for her best experiences, when she should be laying in a store of happy memories to fall back upon, when memory becomes her principal pleasure in life, Evadne had lived alone, shut up in herself, her large intelligence idle or misapplied, and her hungry heart seeking such satisfaction as it could find in pleasant imaginings. As she went about, punctually performing her ineffectual duties, or sat silently sewing, she had been to all outward seeming an example to be revered of graceful wifehood and womanliness; but when one came to know what her inner life had become in consequence of the fatal repression of the best powers of her mind, it was evident that she was in reality a miserable type of a woman wasted. The natural bent of the average woman is devotion to home and husband and children; but there are many women to whom domestic duties are distasteful, and these are now making life tolerable for themselves by finding more congenial spheres of action. There are many women, however, above the average, who are quite capable of acquitting themselves creditably both in domestic and public life, and Evadne was one of these. Had she been happily married she would undoubtedly have been one of the first to distinguish herself, one of the foremost in the battle which women are waging against iniquity of every kind. Her keen insight would have kept her sympathies actively alive, and her disinterestedness would have made her careless of criticism. That was her nature. But nature thwarted ceases to be beneficent. She places us here fully equipped for the part she has designed us to play in the world, and if we, men or women, neglect to exercise the powers she has bestowed upon us, the consequences are serious. I did not understand at the time what Evadne meant when she said that she had made it impossible for herself to act. I thought she had deliberately shirked her duty under the mistaken idea that she would make life pleasanter for herself by doing so; but I learnt eventually how the impulse to act had been curbed before it quickened, by her promise to Colonel Colquhoun, which had, in effect, forced her into the disastrous attitude which we had all such good reason to deplore. It seemed cruel that all the most beautiful instincts of her being, her affection, her unselfishness, even her modest reserve and womanly self-restraint, should have been used to injure her; but that is exactly what had happened. And now the difficulty was: how to help her? How to rouse her from the unwholesome form of

self-repression which had brought about her present morbid state of mind.

I was sitting up late the night after my second visit to Sir Shadwell Rock, considering the matter. Sir Shadwell's advice was still the same : "Send her to me." But the initial difficulty, how to get her to go, remained. How to draw her from the dreary seclusion of her *Home in the Woman's Sphere*, and persuade her that hours of ease are only to be earned in action. I thought again of Lady Adeline, and sat down to write to her.

The household had retired, and the night was oppressively silent. I felt overcome with fatigue, but was painfully wide awake, as happens very often when I am anxious about a bad case. But this was the third night since I had been in bed, and I thought now I would go when I had finished my letter to Lady Adeline, and do my best to sleep. As I crossed the hall, which was in darkness save for the candle I carried in my hand, I fancied I heard an unaccountable sound, a dull thud, thud, coming from I could not tell whence for the moment. The senses are singularly acute in certain stages of fatigue, and mine were all alive that night to any impression, my hearing especially so ; and there was no mistake. I had stopped short to listen, and, impossible as I knew it would have been at any other time, I was sure that I could distinctly hear a horse galloping on the turf of the common more than a mile away, a mounted horse with a rider who was urging him to his utmost speed ; and in some inexplicable manner I also became conscious of the fact that the horseman was a messenger sent in all haste for me.

Mechanically I put my candle down and opened the hall door. It was a bright night. The fresh invigorating frosty air seemed to clear my mental vision still more strongly as it blew in upon me. Diavolo in mess dress, his cap gone, his fair hair blown back by the wind ; breathless with excitement and speed ; with thought suspended, but dry lips uttering incessantly a cry for help—"Galbraith ! Galbraith ! Galbraith !" My pulses kept time to the thud of the horse's hoofs on the common. I waited. I had not the shadow of a doubt that I was wanted. But I did not ask myself by whom.

The sound only ceased for a perceptible second or so at the lodge gates. Were they open ? Had he cleared them ? What a jump ! Thud ! He must be well-mounted ! On the drive

now! The gravel is flying! Across the lawn—Diavolo. Good speed indeed!

Scarcely five minutes since I heard him first till he stopped at the steps in the starlight, hoarsely panting "Galbraith! Galbraith!"

"I am here, my boy! What is it?"

"Come! Come to her at once! Colonel Colquhoun is dead."

The mind, quickened by the shock of a startling piece of intelligence, suddenly sums up our suspicions for us sometimes in one crisp homely phrase. This is what mine did. "The murder is out!" I thought, the moment Diavolo spoke. Evadne—was this the end of it! Such a state of mind as hers had been lately, might continue for the rest of her life, to her torment, without influencing her actions; but, on the other hand, an active phase might supervene at any moment.

Diavolo had dismounted and sat down on one of the steps, utterly exhausted. "Here, take the reins," he said, "and mount. I'm done. I'll look after myself. Don't waste a moment."

I needed no urging.

"I have actually meditated murder lately. Murder—murder for my own benefit."

The horrible phrases, in regular succession, kept time to the rhythmical ring of the iron shoes on the frozen ground as the horse returned with me, still at a steady gallop, to As-You-Like-It.

I had recognized the animal. It was the same fine charger which Colonel Colquhoun himself had been riding so admirably on parade the last time I saw him. Only yesterday morning! "Murder actually, murder for my own benefit." No! no!—stumble. Hold up! only a stone. Shall we ever be there? Suspense—"Murder actually"—no, it shall not be that! Hope is the word I want. Beat it out of the hardened earth! Hope, hope, hope, hope, nothing, nothing but hope!

We had arrived at last. No one about. Doors open, lights flaring, and a strange silence.

Leaving the horse to do as he liked, I walked straight upstairs, and on the first landing I met Evadne's maid.

"I hoped it was you, sir. Come this way," she whispered, and pushed open a door which stood already ajar, gently, as if afraid of disturbing some sleeper.

It was Colonel Colquhoun's bedroom, large and luxurious, like the man himself. He was stretched upon the bed, in evening dress, his gray face upward. One glance at *that* sufficed. But almost before I had crossed the threshold I was conscious of an indescribable sense of relief. There were four persons in the room, that poor old "begad" major, who could not ride, and Captain Bartlet, both hastily summoned from the depôt evidently, and still in mess dress; Dr. James in ordinary morning costume, with a covert coat on; and Evadne herself in a black evening dress, open at the throat. Is was her attitude that relieved my mind the moment I saw her. She was seated beside the bed, crying heartily and healthily. The three gentlemen stood just behind her, gravely concerned; silent, sympathetic, helpless, waiting for me. No one spoke.

For the dead, reverence. I stood by the bed looking down on the splendid frame, prone now and inert, and again I thought of the last time I had seen him, a fine figure of a man, finely mounted, and exercising his authority arrogantly. I looked into the blank countenance. No other man on earth had ever called forth curses from my inmost soul such as I had uttered, to my shame, in one great burst of rage that had surprised me and shaken my fortitude the night before as I journeyed back alone, without the slightest prospect, that I could see, of saving her. The blank face, decently composed. His right hand, palm upward, was stretched out toward me as if he were offering it to me; and thankful I was to feel that I could clasp it honestly. I had not a word or look on my conscience for which I deserved a reproach from the dead man lying there. I took his hand; a doctor doing a perfunctory duty? No, a last natural rite, an act of reconciliation. In that solemn moment, still holding his hand and gazing down into his face, I rejoiced to feel that the trouble had passed from my soul, that the rage and bitterness were no more, and that only the touching thought of his kindly hospitality and perfect confidence in my own integrity—a confidence impossible in a man who has not himself the saving grace of a better nature—would remain with me from that time forth forever.

I laid my hand on Evadne's shoulder, and she looked up.

"Ah! have you come?" she cried, her voice broken with sobs that shook her. "Is it really true? Can nothing be done? Oh, poor, poor man! What a life! What a death!

A miserable, miserable, misspent life, and such an end—in a moment—without a word of warning—and all these years when I have been beside him, silent and helpless. If only I could have done something to help him—said something. Surely, surely there was *something* I might have done?" She held her clasped hands out toward me, the familiar gesture, appealing to me to blame her.

"Thank Heaven!" I inwardly ejaculated. "This is as it should be."

In the presence of eternal death, her own transient sufferings were forgotten, and healthy human pity destroyed any sense of personal injury she might have cherished.

We four men stood awkwardly, patiently by for several minutes, listening to her innocent self-upbraidings, knowing her story, and touched beyond expression by the utter absence of all selfish sentiment in any word she said.

When she was quite exhausted, I drew her hand through my arm, and took her to her own room.

Cardiac syncope was the cause of death. Colonel Colquhoun had been out that evening, and had, through some mistake of the coachman's, missed his carriage, and walked home in a towering rage. The exertion and excitement, acting together on a heart already affected, had brought on the attack. He was storming violently in the hall, with his face flushed crimson—so the servants told us—when all at once he stopped, and called "Evadne!" twice, as if in alarm; and Mrs. Colquhoun ran down from the drawing room; but before she could reach him he fell on the floor, and never spoke again.

CHAPTER XVII.

MUCH of my time during the next few months was devoted to the consideration of Evadne's affairs. Her father made no sign, and she had no other relation in a position to come forward and share the responsibility; but, happily, she had very good friends. I had noticed that Diavolo was singularly agitated when he brought the terrible news that night to Fountain Towers, but thought little of it, as I knew the boy to be emotional. The shock to his own feelings did not, however, prevent him thinking of others, and the next thing I heard of him was that he had been to Morningquest and waited till the telegraph office opened, in order to send the news to

his own people, and beg them to return at once, if they could, on Evadne's account; and this they did, in the kindest manner, with as little delay as possible.

"I have only come to fetch Evadne," Lady Adeline said when she arrived. "I am going to take her away at once from this dreadful house and this dreary English winter to a land of sunshine and flowers and soft airs, and I hope to bring her back in the spring herself again—as *you* have never known her!"

Mr. Hamilton-Wells stayed behind, at considerable personal inconvenience, to consult with me about business. Colonel Colquhoun had died intestate and also in debt. What he had done with his money we could not make out, except that a large sum had been sunk in an annuity, which of course died with him. But one thing was quite evident, which was that Evadne would have little or nothing besides her pension from the service, and that would be the merest pittance for one always accustomed to the command of money as she had been. Mr. Hamilton-Wells wished to impose a handsome sum on her yearly by fraud and deceit, out of his own ample income.

"Really, ladies are so peculiar about money matters," he said. "I feel quite sure she would not accept sixpence from me if I were to offer it to her. But she need not know where the money comes from. It can be paid into her account at the bank, you see, regularly, and she will take it for granted that she is entitled to it."

"I am not so sure of that," I answered with some heat, "but at any rate the plan is not possible."

"Now, my dear Galbraith," Mr. Hamilton-Wells remonstrated, "do not put your foot down in that way. I am the older man, and I may also say, without offence, the older friend, and I am married; and Lady Adeline will strongly approve of what I propose."

"I do not doubt it," I maintained; "but it cannot be done."

"She is not the kind of person to marry for money," Mr. Hamilton-Wells observed, looking up at the ceiling.

"Who? Mrs. Colquhoun?" I asked. "I don't understand you."

"Oh," he answered, "it occurred to me that you might be thinking such a consideration would weigh with her in the choice of a second husband."

I stared at the man. He was sitting at a writing table in

my library, with the papers we had been going through spread out before him, and I was standing opposite ; and, as he spoke, he leant back in his chair, with his elbows on the arms of it, brought the tips of his long white fingers together, and smiled up at me, bland as a child, innocent of all offence. I am inclined to think he did secretly enjoy the effect of unexpected remarks without in the least appreciating the permanent impression he might be making. But I don't know. Some of these apparently haphazard observations of his were pregnant with reflection, and I believe, if his voice had been strong and determined instead of precise and insinuating; if he had brushed his hair up, instead of parting it in the middle and plastering it down smoothly on either side of his head; if his hands had been hardened by exposure and use instead of whitened by excessive care ; if he had worn tweed instead of velvet, Mr. Hamilton-Wells would have been called acute, and dreaded for his cynicism. But looking as he did, inoffensive as a lady's luggage, he was allowed to pass unsuspected ; and if his mind were an infernal machine, concealed by a quilted cover, the world would have to have seen it to credit the fact.

I put my hands in my pockets after that last remark, and walked to the window glumly; but as I stood with my back to him, I could not help wondering if he was making faces at me, or up to any other undignified antics by way of relaxation. Did he ever wriggle with merriment when he was alone? I turned suddenly at the thought. He was calmly perusing a paper through his pince-nez, with an expression of countenance at once so benign, silly, and self-satisfied, that I felt I should like to have apologised for the suspicion.

"There is nothing for it, Galbraith," she said, "that I can see. She must either be poverty-stricken or have an income provided for her."

"She has enough to go on with for the present," I answered.

"You can provide the money yourself if you would rather," he suggested, in the tone of one who gives in good-naturedly to oblige you. "I don't care, you know, where the money comes from, so long as the source is disinterested and respectable."

I had returned to the table, but now again I walked to the window.

"But, I think," he continued, while I stood with my back to him, "as you say, for the present nothing need be done. Give her time for a rope—eh? What I do deprecate is leaving her

to be driven by poverty to marry for money. My dear Galbraith," he broke off, protesting, "you have been on the prance for the last half-hour. For a medical man, you have less repose of manner than is essential, I should say. In fact, you quite give me the notion that you are impatient. But perhaps I am detaining you?"

"Oh, not at all," I assured him.

"Well, as I was saying," he pursued, "give her time to marry again. That would be the most satisfactory settlement of her difficulties. She is, I quite agree with you, a very attractive person. Now, there is the Duke of Panama already, Lady Adeline says—but she seems to have an objection to princes, especially if they are at all obese. I do not like obese people myself. Now, do *you* ever feel nervous on that score?"

"What score?"

"The score of obesity. You are just nicely proportioned at present for a man of your age and height. *I*, of course, am far too slender. But if you were to get any stouter by and by, it would be such a dreadful thing! I hope flesh is not in your family on both sides. On one I know it is. Now, my people are all slender. There is a great deal in that, I notice."

He was doing up the documents now with much neatness and dexterity.

"These had better go to my lawyer," he remarked.

"Why not to mine?" I suggested.

"Oh, allow me," he said, with great suavity—"as the older man. Of course, as a question of right, we neither of us have any claim to the privilege of being allowed to help this lady. Eventually, however, one of us may secure the right; but there is many a slip, you know, and perhaps it would be less awkward afterward if a person whose disinterestedness is quite above suspicion had had the direction of affairs from the first."

There could be no doubt of what he meant by this time, and the argument was unanswerable.

"Do you feel inclined to return with me to Mentone?" he asked.

"I am afraid I cannot get away just now."

"Ah! I suppose it *is* too soon. Well, she is quite safe with us, and we will bring her back to Hamilton House in the spring." Mr. Hamilton-Wells smiled complacently as he took his seat in his carriage. I almost expected him to thank me

for the sport I had been giving him, he looked so like a man who had been enjoying himself thoroughly. I thought about that last remark of his after he had gone, and pitied Lady Adeline. It must be trying to be liable at any moment to have words, which one deliberately chooses to hide one's thoughts, set aside as of no consequence, and the thoughts themselves answered naïvely. However, there was no real reason for hiding my thoughts any longer on that subject. I had done my best manfully, I hope, while the necessity lasted, to mask my feeling for her, even from myself; but there was now no further need for self-restraint. I might live for her and love her honestly and openly at last; and, accordingly, when Sir Shadwell Rock came to me for a few days at Christmas, I did not attempt to conceal my intention from him.

"It is a great risk," he said gravely, "a very great risk. Of course, now that the first cause of all the trouble is removed, the mental health may be thoroughly restored. So long as there is no organic brain lesion there is hope in all such cases. But I tell you frankly that the first call upon her physical strength may set up a recurrence of the moral malady, and you cannot foresee the consequences. However, you know as much about that as I do, and I can see it's no use warning you. You have made up your mind."

"Yes," I answered. "I shall be able to take good care of her if only I am fortunate enough to win her."

"Well, well, she seems to be a loyal little body," the old gentleman replied; "and I wish you success with all my heart. She will have much in her favour as your wife, and since you are determined to run the risk, let us hope for the best."

And that was just what I did while I waited for the spring, and to such good purpose that I became light-hearted as a schoolboy. I watched the birds building; I noticed the first faint green shadow on the hedges, and the yellowing of the gorse; I listened in the freshness of the dawn to the thrush that sang "Evadne." And when at last Mr. Hamilton-Wells walked in one day unexpectedly, and explained, somewhat superfluously, that he had come, I could have thrown up my hat and cheered!

"But without the ladies," he added.

"Have you left them behind you?" I demanded, trying not to look blank.

"Yes," he answered very slowly, then added: "At Hamilton House." I suppose nobody ever thought of kicking any-

thing so "slender" as Mr. Hamilton-Wells, or associated such a vulgar idea as would have been involved in the suspicion of a deliberate intention to "sell" you with a person of such courteous and distinguished manners. But one did occasionally wonder what he was like at school, and if blessings and abuse were often showered on him then at one and the same time, as had come to be the case in later life.

He had come to ask me to dinner that evening, and when I arrived he was standing on the hearthrug, gracefully, with a palm-leaf fan in his hand. Evadne greeted me quietly, Lady Adeline with affectionate cordiality, and Diavolo, who was the only other member of the party, with a grave yet bright demeanour which made him more like his Uncle Dawne in miniature than ever.

"'In the spring,'" Mr. Hamilton-Wells observed precisely, waving his fan to emphasise each word, and addressing a remote angle of the cornice, "'In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love.'"

Diavolo flushed crimson, Lady Adeline looked annoyed, but Evadne sat pale and still, as if she had not heard.

I was right about her not being likely to leave her affairs in anybody's hands. Very soon after her arrival she insisted upon having an accurate statement of accounts, and begged me to go over to Hamilton House one morning to render it, as she found Mr. Hamilton-Wells quite unapproachable on the subject.

She received me in the morning room alone, and began at once in the most business-like way. "Mr. Hamilton-Wells' reticence convinces me that I am a beggar," she said cheerfully. "Tell me the exact sum I have to depend upon?"

I named it.

"Oh, then," she proceeded, "the question is, What shall I do? I cannot possibly live in the world, you know, on such a sum as that."

"What do you propose to do?" I asked, her tone having suggested some definite plan already formed.

"Go into a sisterhood, I think," she answered.

"Nonsense!" I exclaimed.

She raised her eyebrows.

"I beg your pardon," I said. "But you are not fit for such a life. Why, in a month you would be seeing visions and dreaming dreams."

"But I am afraid I shall do that now in any case, wherever I am," she sighed; and then she added, smiling at her own

cynicism; "and I think I had better go where such things can be turned to good account. I have had no horrid thoughts, by the way, since I left As-You-Like-It, but of course I shall relapse."

"No, you will not," I blurted out, "if you marry happily."

Her face flushed all over at the word.

"Will you, Evadne," I proceeded—"or rather could you—be happy with me?" She rose, and made me a deep courtesy. "Thank you," she answered scornfully, "for your kind consideration, Sir George Galbraith! I always thought you the most disinterested person I ever knew, but I had no idea that even you could go so far as that!"

And then she left me alone with my consternation.

How in the name of all that is perplexing had I offended her?

Lady Adeline came in at that moment, and I put the question to her, telling her exactly what I had said. She burst out laughing.

"My dear George!" she exclaimed, "forgive me! I can't help it! But don't you think yourself you were a little bit abrupt? You do not seem to have mentioned the fact that you feel any special affection for Evadne. It did not occur to you to protest that you loved her, for instance?"

"No, it did not," I answered; "I should think that the fact is patent enough without protestations."

"She may have overlooked it, all the same," Lady Adeline suggested, still laughing at me. "I would advise you to find out the next time you have a chance."

"Where is she?" I demanded, going toward the door.

"Oh, you won't see her again to-day, you may be sure," she rejoined; "and it is just as well, you bear, if you mean to make love to her with that kind of countenance!"

But I would not be advised.

I strode straight up to her room, which I happened to know, and knocked at the door.

She answered "Come in!" evidently not expecting me, and when she saw who it was she was furious.

"I cannot understand what you mean by such conduct!" she exclaimed.

"Well, then, I'll make you understand!" I retorted.

Mr. Hamilton-Wells insinuated afterward that Evadne only accepted me to save her life. But I protested against the libel. I have never, to my certain knowledge, uttered a rough

word either to or before my little lady in the whole course of our acquaintance. But why, when she loved me, she should have gone off in that ridiculous tantrum simply because I did not begin by expressing my love for her, I shall never be able to understand. She might have been sure that I should have enough to say on that subject as soon as I was accepted.

The day after the engagement was announced Diavolo called upon me. Needless to say he found me in the seventh heaven. I had been walking about the house, unable to settle to anything, and when I heard he had come I thought it was to congratulate me, and I hurried down; but the first glimpse of his face caused my heart to contract ominously.

"Well, you have played me a nice trick," he said, with concentrated bitterness, "both of you. You knew what *my* intentions were and you gave me no hint of your own. You preferred to steal a march on me. I could not have imagined such a thing possible from you. I should have supposed that you would have thought such underhand conduct low."

"Diavolo!" I gasped, "are you in earnest?"

"Am I in earnest!" he ejaculated. "Look at me! I suppose you think I am incapable of deep feeling."

"If only I had known!" I exclaimed. "Yet—how could I guess? The difference of age—and, Diavolo, my dear boy, believe me, I do sympathise with you most sincerely. This is a bitter drop in the cup for me. But—but—even if I had known—will it make it worse for you if I say it?—it is me she loves. She would not have accepted anyone but me. Even if I *had* withdrawn in your favour——"

He waved his hand to stop me. "Don't distress yourself," he said. "It is fate. We are to be punished with extinction as a family for the sins of our forefathers. My case will be the same as Uncle Dawne's—only," he added suddenly, and clenched his fists, "only, if you treat her badly, I'll blow your brains out."

"I hope you will," I answered.

He looked hard at me with a pained expression in his eyes. "Ah, I'm a fool," he said; "forgive me! I don't know what I'm saying. I'm mad with disappointment, and grief, and rage. Of course, if she loves you, I never had a chance. Yet the possibility of giving me one, had you known, occurred to you. Well, I will show you that I can be as generous as you are." He held out his hand. "I—I congratulate you," he faltered. "Only, make her happy. But I know you will."

He felt about for his hat, and, having found it, walked with an uncertain step toward the door, blinded with tears.

I stood long as he had left me.

> Ah, brother! have you not full oft
> Found, even as the Roman did,
> That in life's most delicious draught
> *Surgit amari aliquid?*

Lady Adeline met me sadly the next time I went to Hamilton House.

"Do you blame me?" I faltered.

"No, oh, no!" she generously responded. "None of us—not one of us—not even Angelica, suspected for a moment that he was in earnest. It had been his wolf-cry, you know, all his life. Evadne herself has no inkling of the truth."

"I hope she never will," I said.

"If it rests with Diavolo, she will not," his mother answered, proud of him, and with good cause.

It is a salient feature of the Morningquest family history that not one of them ever had a great grief which they did not make in the long run a source of joy to other people. Diavolo's first impulse was to go and see service abroad; but he soon abandoned that idea, although it would have afforded him the distraction he so sorely needed, and resigned his commission instead; and then took up his abode at Morne, in order to devote himself to his grandfather entirely, and it was in Diavolo's companionship that the latter found the one great pleasure and solace of his declining years. The old duke had been wont to say of Diavolo at his worst: "That lad is a gentleman at heart, and, mark my words, he will prove himself so yet!"

And so he has.

His was the first and loveliest present Evadne received. He did not come to her second wedding, but, then, nobody else did except his father and mother, for it pleased us all to keep the ceremony as quiet and private as possible; so that his absence was not significant; and, afterward, he rather made a point, if anything, of not avoiding us in any way. In fact, the only change I noticed in him was that he never again made any of those laughing protestations of love and devotion to Evadne with which he used to amuse us all in the dark days of her captivity.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WE were married in London, and when the final arrangements were being discussed, I asked her where she would like to go after the ceremony.

"Oh, let us go home, Don," she said—she insisted on calling me "Don." I told her the name conveyed no idea to me, but she answered that I was obtuse, and she was sure I should grow to love it in time, even if I did not understand it, if it were only because it was *fetish*, and nobody could use it but herself; to which extent, by the way, I was very soon able to endorse her opinion. "Don't let us go to nasty foreign hotels. I hate travelling, and I hate sight-seeing—the kind of sight-seeing one does for the sake of seeing. We will go home and be happy. No place could be half so beautiful to me as yours is now."

That she should call it "home" at once, and long to be settled there, was a good omen, I thought. But she was happy, beyond all possibility of a doubt, in the anticipation of her life with me.

Soon after our return I took her into Morningquest, and left her to lunch with her aunt, Mrs. Orton Beg. I had business on the other side of the city which detained me for some hours, and when at last I could get away, I hurried back, being naturally impatient to rejoin her. Mrs. Orton Beg was alone in the drawing room, and I suppose something in the expression of my face amused her, for she laughed, and answered a question I had not asked.

"Out there," she said, meaning in the garden.

I turned and looked through the open French window, and instantly that haunting ghost of an indefinite recollection was laid. Evadne was sleeping in a high-backed chair, with the creeper-curtained old brick wall for a background, and half her face concealed by a large summer hat which she held in her hand.

"I thought you would remember when you saw her so," said Mrs. Orton Beg. "It was just after that unhappy marriage fiasco. She had run away, and sought an asylum here, and when you were so struck by her appearance, I could not help thinking it was a thousand pities that you had not met before it was too late."

"And then you asked me to use the Scottish gift of second

sight—I was thinking at the moment that she was the kind of girlie I should choose for a wife, and so I said she should marry a man called George——"

"Which made it doubly a Delphic oracle for vagueness to me," said Mrs. Orton Beg, "because Colonel Colquhoun's name was also George."

"Now, this is a singular coincidence!" I exclaimed.

"Ah!" she ejaculated. "But I do not talk of 'coincidences'—there is a special providence, you know."

"Which deserts Edith and protects Evadne?"

"You are incorrigible!"

"You are a demon worshipper! The Infinite Good gives us the knowledge and power if we will use it. Evadne *was* a Seventh Wave!"

"'The Seventh Waves of humanity must suffer,' you said." We looked at each other. "The oracle was ominous. But surely she has suffered enough? Heaven grant her happiness at last!"

"Amen," I answered fervently.

As soon as we were settled, I tried to order her life so as to take her mind completely out of the old groove. I kept her constantly out of doors, and never let her sit and sew alone, for one thing, or lounge in easy chairs, or do anything else that is enervating.

I made her ride, too, and rise regularly in the morning; not too early, for that is as injurious in one way as too late is in another; the latter enervates, but the former exhausts. Regularity is the best discipline. I taught her also to shoot at a mark, and took her into the coverts in the autumn; but she could not bear the sight of suffering creatures, and unfortunately she wounded a bird the first time we were out, and I was never able to persuade her to shoot at another. However, there was active exercise enough for her without that, so long as she was able to take it, and when it became necessary to curtail the amount, she drove both morning and afternoon, and took short walks and pottered about the grounds in between times.

I had bought As-You-Like-It while she was abroad with the Hamilton-Wellses, and had had the whole place pulled down, and the site converted into a plantation, so that no trace was left of that episode to vex her. In fact, I had done all that I could think of as likely in any way to help to re-establish her health, and certainly she was very happy. Everything

I wished her to do seemed to be a pleasure to her; and mind and body grew rapidly so vigorous that I lost all fear for her. She said she was a new creature, and she looked it.

When we had been married about a year, Sir Shadwell Rock came to pay us a visit. Evadne was quite at her best then, and I introduced her to him triumphantly.

He asked about her progress with kindly interest when we were alone together, and declared heartily that she was certainly to all appearance thoroughly restored, that he was quite in love with her himself, and hoped to see her in the van of the new movement yet.

She took to the dear old man, and told him his great reputation did not frighten her one bit; and she would lean on his arm familiarly out in the grounds, pelt him with gorse blossom, fill his pockets with rose leaves surreptitiously, till they bulged out like bags behind, and keep him smiling perpetually at her pretty ways. He had been going abroad for a holiday, but we persuaded him to stay with us instead, and when we parted with him at last reluctantly, he declared that Evadne had made him young again, and the wrinkles were all smoothed out.

His last words to me were: "So far so good, Galbraith," and I knew he meant to warn as well as to congratulate. "Don't keep her in cotton wool too much. Make her face sickness and suffering while she is well herself. Take warning by the small-pox epidemic. She has no morbid horror of that subject, because she knows practically how much can be done for the sufferers. If she devote herself to good works, she will be sanguine because so much is being accomplished, instead of dwelling despondently on the hopeless amount there is still to do."

Soon after this, however, I began to hope that a new interest in life was coming to cure her of all morbid moods for ever. I was anxious at first, but she was so quietly happy in the prospect herself, and she continued so well in spite of the drain upon her strength, that I soon took heart again.

"You have got to be very young, Don, since I was so good as to marry you," she said to me one day.

She had come in with some flowers for me, and had caught me whistling instead of working.

Sir Shadwell had consented, in his usual kind and generous way, to share the responsibility of this time with me. He came down to us for an occasional "week-end," just to see

how she progressed, and his observations, like my own, continued to be satisfactory. It was a crucial test, we knew. If we could carry her safely through this trying time, she would be able to take her proper place with the best of her sex in the battle of life, to fight with them and for them, which was what we both ardently desired to see her do.

There had been never a word of the mental malady since Colquhoun's death. I had judged it well to let her forget she had ever suffered so if she could, and I had no reason to suspect that she ever thought of it. She had had hours, and even days, of depression since our marriage, but had always been able to account for them satisfactorily; and now, although of course she got down at times, she was less often so than is usually the case under the circumstances, and was always easily consoled.

She paid me a visit in my study one day. She had a habit of coming occasionally when I was at work, a habit that happily emphasized the difference between my solitary bachelor days and these. She was shy of her caresses as a rule, but would occasionally make my knee her seat, if it happened to suit her convenience, while she filled the flower vases on my table; or she would stand behind me with her hands clasped round my neck, and lean her cheek against my hair. She did so now.

"You love your work, Don, don't you?" she said.

"Yes, sweetheart," I answered; "next to you, it is the great delight of my life."

"But, Don, you find it all-absorbing; don't you?"

"No, not *all*-absorbing, *now*."

"But sufficiently so to be a comfort to you if you ever had any great grief? After the first shock, you would return to your old pursuits, would you not? And, by and by, you would find solace in them?"

I unclasped her hands from my neck, and drew her round to me. There was a new note in her voice that sounded ominous.

"What is the trouble, little woman!" I whispered, when I had her safe in my arms.

"I don't think I could die and leave you, Don, if I thought you would be miserable."

"Well, then, don't allow yourself to entertain any doubt on the subject," I answered; "for I should be more than 'miserable.' I should never care for anything in the world again."

"But if I should have to die——"

"There is no need to distress either yourself or me by such an idle supposition, Evadne," I answered. "There is not the slightest occasion for alarm."

"I am not *alarmed*," she said, and then she was silent.

A few days later, I found her sitting on the floor in the library, reading a book she had taken from one of the lower shelves. It was a book of Sir Shadwell Rock's on the heredity of vice. I took it from her gently, remarking as I did so: "I would rather you did not read these things just now, Evadne."

"I suppose you agree with Sir Shadwell Rock," she said.

"Let me help you up," I answered.

"Do you?" she persisted.

"Of course. He is our chief authority," I answered. "But promise me, Evadne, not to look at any of those books again without consulting me. I shall be having you like the medical students who imagine they have symptoms of every disease they study."

"It would mark a strange change in my mind," she answered; "for I used to be able to study any subject of the kind without being affected in that way."

That her mind had changed, alas! or rather, that it had been injured by friction and pressure of the restrictions imposed upon it, was the suspicion which necessitated my present precaution, but I could not say so.

She held out her hands for me to help her to rise. "Why are women kept in the dark about these things?" she said, pointing to the books on heredity. "Why are we never taught as you are? We are the people to be informed."

"You are quite right," I said. "It is criminal to withhold knowledge from any woman who has the capacity to acquire it. But there is a time for everything, you know, my sweetheart."

"Now, that poor Colonel Colquhoun," she went on as if I had not spoken. "He for one should never have been born. With his ancestry, he must have come into the world foredoomed to a life of dissipation and disease. It is awful to think we may any of us become the parents of people who can't be moral without upsetting the whole natural order of the universe. O, Don! it is dreadful to know it, but it is sinful to be ignorant of the fact."

"But there is no fear for our children, Evadne," I said.

"Ah! that is what I want to know!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands round my arm.

"Come out into the grounds then, sweetheart," I answered, affecting a cheerfulness I was far from feeling; "and I will tell you the whole family history."

I had to go out that evening to see a serious case in consultation with a brother practitioner. I had ordered the dogcart for ten o'clock, and Evadne came out into the hall with me from the drawing room, where I had been reading to her since dinner, when it was brought round.

"*Must* you go?" she said listlessly.

"I am afraid I must," I answered; "it is a matter of life and death. But why shouldn't you come too! It will be much better than staying here alone. I ought to have thought of it sooner. Do come! I will send the dogcart back, and have the brougham."

"It would delay you," she said, hesitating.

"Oh, no! Two horses in the brougham will get over the ground faster than one in the dogcart. Come! Let me get you some wraps."

"But when we arrive, my presence will be an inconvenience," she objected.

"In no way," I answered. "It will not be a long business, and you can wait very well in the carriage with a book and a lamp."

She came out and looked at the night, still undecided. The weather was damp and uninviting.

"I don't think I'll go, Don," she said, shivering. "Good-bye and safe home to you!"

As I drove along, I cast about in my own mind for a suitable companion for Evadne, someone who would vary the monotony for her when I had to be out. She had no lady-loves, as so many women have. Mrs. Orton Beg was at Fraylingay again, and Lady Adeline was the only other friend I knew of who would be congenial just then; but she had multifarious duties of her own to attend to, and it would not have been fair to ask her, especially as she was sure to come if she knew she was wanted, however great the inconvenience to herself. I knew nothing at that time of two other friends of Evadne's, Mrs. Sillinger and Mrs. Malcomson, to whom I afterward learnt that she was much attached. Owing, I think, to the unnatural habit of reticence which had been forced upon her, she had not mentioned them to me, although she

continued to correspond with them. It took her some time to realize that every interest of hers was matter of moment to me. A certain colonel and Mrs. Guthrie Brimston had recently settled in the neighbourhood, in order, as they gave out, to be near the Morningquest family, with whom they claimed relationship, on the ground, I believe; that they also were Guthries. Colonel Guthrie Brimston led people to suppose that he had left the service entirely on the duke's account, his disinterested intention being to vary the monotony for the poor old gentleman during his declining years. They had claimed Evadne's acquaintance with effusion, but she had not responded very cordially.

"Let them have a carriage and horses whenever they like, Don," she said, "and give them plenty to eat; but don't otherwise encourage them to come here."

Recollecting which, I now inferred that Mrs. Guthrie Brimston would not answer my present purpose at all.

This was the first time Evadne had shown any objection to being left alone. She used to insist upon my going away sometimes, because, she said, I should be so very glad to come back to her! But she was never exacting in any way, and never out of temper. And she had such pretty ways as a wife! little endearing womanly ways which one felt to be the spontaneous outcome of tenderness untold, and inexpressible. It was strange how her presence pervaded the house; strange to me that one little body could make such a difference.

Foolishly fond if you like. But if every man could care as much for a woman, hallowed would be her name, and the strife-begetting uncertainties of heaven and hell would be allowed to lapse in order to make room for healthy human happiness. Our hearts have been starved upon fables long enough; we demand some certainty; and as knowledge increases, waging its inexorable war of extermination against evil, our beautiful old earth will be allowed to be lovable, and life a blessing, and death itself only a last sweet sleep, neither to be sought nor shunned—"The soothing sinking down on hard-earned holy rest," from which, if we arise again, it shall not be to suffer. No life could be fuller of promise than mine at this moment. Nothing was wanting but the patter of little feet about the house, and they were coming. Doubts and fears were latent for once. My hopes were limitless, my content was extreme.

"May you have quiet rest to-night, my darling; may your heart grow strong, and your faith in man revive at last."

. . . . . .

About halfway to my destination, I met the gentleman who had asked me out in consultation, returning. He was on his way to my house to tell me that the patient was dead. My presence could therefore be of no avail, and I turned back also. I had not been absent more than an hour, but I found, on entering the house, that Evadne had already retired. It was a good sign, I thought, as she had been rather fidgety the whole day. I had some letters to write, and went at once to my study for the purpose, taking a candle with me from the hall. The servants, not expecting me back until late, had turned out most of the lights downstairs. The lamp in my study, however, was still burning. It stood on the writing table, and the first thing I saw, on entering the room, was a letter lying conspicuously on the blotting pad. It was from Evadne to me.

She had evidently intended me to get it in the morning, for a tray was always left for me in the dining room in case I should be hungry when I came in late, and my chances were all against my going to the study again that night. I put my candle down, and tore the note open with trembling hands. The first few lines were enough. "I am haunted by a terrible fear," she wrote. "I have tried again and again to tell you, but I never could. You would not see that it is prophetic, as I do—in case of our death—nothing to save my daughter from Edith's fate—better both die at once." So I gathered the contents. No time to read. I crumpled the note into my pocket. My labouring breath impeded my progress a moment, but, thank Heaven! I was not paralyzed. Involuntarily I glanced at my laboratory. It was an inner room, kept locked as a rule, but the door was open now—as I knew I had expected it to be. I seized the candle and went to the shelf where I kept the bottles with the ominous red labels. One was missing.

"Evadne!" I shouted, running back through the study and library into the hall, and calling her again and again as I went. If it were not already too late, and she had heard my voice, I knew she would hesitate. I tore up the stairs, and I must have flown, although it seemed a century before I reached her room. I flung open the door.

She *had* heard me.

She was standing beside a dressing table in a listening attitude, with a glass half raised to her lips, and her eyes met mine as I entered.

My first cry of distress had reached her, and the shock of it had been sufficient. Had that note fallen into my hands but one moment later—but I cannot bear to think of it. Even at this distance of time the recollection utterly unmans me. The moment I saw her, however, I could command myself. I took the glass from her hand, and threw it into the fireplace with as little show of haste as possible.

"To bed now, my sweetheart," I said; "and no more nonsense of this kind, you know."

She looked at the fragments of the broken glass, and then at me, in a half wondering, half regretful, half inquiring way that was pitiful to see. Shaken as I was, I could not bear it. While the danger lasted, it was no effort to be calm; but now I broke down, and, throwing myself into a chair, covered my face with my hands, thoroughly overcome.

In a moment she was kneeling beside me.

"O Don!" she exclaimed, "what is it? Why are you so terribly upset?"

Poor little innocent sinner! The one idea had possessed her to the exclusion of every other consideration. I said nothing to her, of course, in the way of blame. It would have been useless. She was bitterly sorry to see me grieved; but her moral consciousness was suspended, and she felt no remorse whatever for her intention, except in so far as it had given me pain. The impulse had passed for the moment, however, and I was so sure of it that I did not even take the fatal phial away with me when I went to my dressing-room; but for forty-six days and nights I never left her an hour alone. The one great hope, however, that the cruel obliquity would be cured by the mother's love when it awoke amply sustained me.

She was well and cheerful for the rest of the time, greatly owing, I am sure, to the influence of Sir Shadwell Rock, who came at once, like the kind and generous friend he was, without waiting to be asked, when he heard what had happened; and announced himself prepared to stay until the danger was over. I heard Evadne laugh very soon after his arrival, and could see that "the worry in her head," as she described it, had gone again, and was forgotten. The impulse, which would have robbed me of all my happiness and hopes had she succeeded in carrying it out, never cost her a thought. The saving suffering of an agony of remorse was what we should like to have seen, for in that there would have been good assurance of healthy moral consciousness restored.

It seemed to be only the power to endure mental misery which had been injured by those weary days of enforced seclusion and unnatural inactivity, for I never knew anyone braver about physical pain. It was the strength to contemplate the sufferings of others, which grows in action and is best developed by turning the knowledge to account for their benefit, that had been sapped by ineffectual brooding, until at last, before the moral shock of indignation which the view of preventable human evils gave her, her right mind simply went out, and a disordered faculty filled the void with projects which only a perverted imagination could contemplate as being of any avail.

Whatever doubts we may have had about her feeling for the child when it came were instantly set at rest. Nothing could have been healthier or more natural than her pride and delight in him. When she saw him for the first time, after he was dressed, I brought him to her myself with his little cheek against my face.

"O Don!" she exclaimed, her eyes opening wide with joy. "I love to see you like that! But what is she like, Don? Give her to me!"

"*She*, indeed!" I answered. "Don't insult my son. He would reproach you himself, but he is speechless with indignation."

"O Don, don't be ridiculous!" she cried, stretching up her arms for him. "Is it really a boy? Do give him to me! I want to see him so!" When I had put him in her arms, she gathered him up jealously, and covered him with kisses, then held him off a little way to look at him, and then kissed him again and again.

"Did you ever see a baby before?" I asked her.

"No, never! never!" she answered emphatically; "never such a darling as this, at all events! His little cheek is just like velvet; and, see! he can curl up his hands! Isn't it wonderful, Don? He's like you, too. I'm sure he is. He's quite dark."

"He's just the colour of that last sunset you were raving about. I told you to be careful."

"O Don, how can you!" she exclaimed. It was beautiful to see her raptures. She was like a child herself, so unaffectedly glad in her precious little treasure, and so surprised! The fact that he would move independently and have ideas of his own seemed never to have occurred to her.

So far so good, as Sir Shadwell said; and we soon had her about again; but the first time she sat up, after her cushions had been arranged for her, and her baby laid on her lap, when I stooped to give them both a kiss of hearty congratulation, she burst into tears.

"It is nothing, Don, don't be concerned," she said, trying bravely to smile again. "I was thinking of my mother. This would have been such a happy day for her."

This made me think of the breach with her father. I had forgotten that she had a father, but it occurred to me now that a reconciliation might add to her happiness, and I wrote to him accordingly to that effect, making the little grandson my excuse. Mr. Frayling replied that he had heard indirectly of his daughter's second marriage, but was not surprised to receive no communication from herself on the subject, because her whole conduct for many years past had really been most extraordinary. If, however, she had become a dutiful wife at last, as I had intimated, he was willing to forgive her, and let bygones be bygones; whereupon I asked him to Fountain Towers, and he came.

He was extremely cordial. I had a long talk with him before he saw Evadne, during which I discovered from whence she took her trick of phrase-making. He expressed himself as satisfied with me, and my position, my reputation, and my place. He also shook his watch chain at my son, which denoted great approval, I inferred; and made many improving remarks, interspersed with much good advice on the subject of babies and the management of estates.

Evadne had been very nervous about meeting him again, but the baby broke the ice, and she was unfeignedly glad to make friends. Upon the whole, however, the reconciliation was not the success that I had anticipated. Father and daughter had lost touch, and, after the first few hours, there was neither pleasure nor pain in their intercourse; nothing, in fact, but politeness. The flow of affection had been too long interrupted. It was diverted to other channels now, and was too deeply imbedded in them to be coaxed back in the old direction. Love is a sacred stream which withdraws itself from the sacrilegious who have offered it outrage.

It was an unmitigated happiness, however, to Evadne to have her brothers and sisters with her again, and from that time forward we had generally some of them at Fountain Towers.

Mrs. Kilroy of Ilverthorpe, otherwise known to her friends as Angelica, was one of the first people privileged to see the baby.

"Oh, you queer little thing!" she exclaimed, pointing her finger at it by way of caress. "I've been thinking all this time that babies were always Speckled Toads. And you are all rosy, and dimpled, and plump, you pretty thing! I wish I had just a dozen like you!"

Poor erratic Angelica, with all her waywardness, "but yet a woman!" There was only the one man that I have ever known who could have developed the best that was in Angelica, and him she had just missed, as so often happens in this world of contraries. I am thinking of our poor Julian, known to her as the Tenor, whom she had met when it was too late, and in an evil hour for us and for herself apparently, the consequences having been his death and her own desolation. Yet I don't know. Those were the first consequences certainly, but others followed and are following. The memory of one good man is a light which sheds the brightest rays that fall on the lives of thousands—as Mr. Kilroy has reason to know; with whom, after the Tenor, Angelica is happier than she could have been with any other man. And then, again, she has Diavolo. The close friendship between them, which had been interrupted for some years, was renewed again in some inexplicable way by the effect of my marriage on Diavolo, and since then they have been as inseparable as their respective duties to husband and grandfather allow. And so the web of life is woven, the puzzling strands resolving themselves out of what has seemed to be a hopeless tangle into the most beautiful designs.

Some of Evadne's ideas of life were considerably enlarged in view of the boy's future.

"I am so glad you are a rich man," she said to me one day, "and have a title and all that. It doesn't matter for you, you know, Don, because you *are* you. But it will give the baby such a start in life."

She summoned me at a very early period of his existence to choose a name for him, and having decided upon George Shadwell Beton, she had him christened with all orthodox ceremony by the Bishop of Morningquest as soon as possible. That duty once accomplished must have relieved her mind satisfactorily with regard to a *Christian* name for him, for she has insisted on calling him by the heathen appellation of Don-

ino ever since, for the flattering reason that his temper when thwarted is exactly like mine.

"I am sure when you were his age you used to kick and scream just as he does when his wishes are not carried out on the instant," she said. "You don't kick and scream now when you are vexed; you look like thunder, and walk out of the room."

"Baby seems to afford you infinite satisfaction when he kicks and screams. You laugh and hug him more, if anything, in his tantrums than when he is good," I remarked.

"I take his tantrums for a sign of strength," she answered. "He is merely standing on his dignity, and demanding his rights as a rule. It was the same thing with his father when he frowned and walked out of the room. He wouldn't be sat upon either, and I used to see in that a sign of self-respect also. It is a long time now since I saw you frown and walk out of the room, Don."

"It is a long time since you attempted to sit upon me," I said.

"I am afraid I neglect you," she answered apologetically; "you see, Donino requires so much of my time."

She continued to be cheerful for months after the birth of the boy, and we waited patiently for some sign which should be an assurance of her complete restoration to mental health; or, so far as I was concerned, for an opportunity of testing her present feeling about the subject that distressed her. I had given up expecting a miraculous cure in a moment, and now only hoped for a gradual change for the better.

The opportunity I was waiting for came one winter's afternoon when she was playing with the baby. It was a moment of leisure with me, the afternoon tea-time, which I always arranged to spend with her if possible, and especially if she would otherwise have been alone, as was the case on this occasion.

I had been responding for half an hour, as well as I could, to incessant appeals for sympathy and admiration—not that I found it difficult to admire the boy, who was certainly a splendid specimen of the human race, although perhaps I ought not to say so; but my command of language never answered his mother's expectations, somehow, when it came to expressing my feelings.

"Do you think you care as much for him as I do, Don?" she burst out at last.

"More," I answered seriously.

"Why? How?" she demanded, surprised by my tone.

"Because I never could have hurt him."

"Hurt him!" she exclaimed, gathering him up in her arms. "Do you mean that I could hurt him! hurt my baby! Oh!" She got up and stood looking at me indignantly for a few seconds with the child's face hidden against her neck; and then she rang the bell sharply, and sent him away.

"What do you mean, Don?" she said, when we were alone together again. "Tell me? You would not say a cruel thing like that for nothing."

"I am referring to that night before he was born," I said, taking the little bottle from my pocket. This seems to me to have been the cruellest operation that I have ever had to perform.

"O Don!" she cried, greatly distressed. "I understand. I should have killed him. But why, why do you remind me of that now?"

"I want to be quite sure that you have learnt what a mistaken notion that was, and that you regret the impulse."

She sat down on a low chair before the fire, with her elbows on her knees and her face buried in her hands, and remained so for some time. She wanted to think it out, and tell me exactly.

"I do not feel any regret," she said at last. "I would not do the same thing now, but it is only because I am not now occupied with the same thoughts. They have fallen into the background of my consciousness, and I no longer perceive the utility of self-sacrifice."

"But do you not perceive the sin of suicide?"

"Not of that kind of suicide," she answered. "You see, we have the divine example. Christ committed suicide to all intents and purposes by deliberately putting himself into the hands of his executioners; but his motive makes *them* responsible for the crime; and my motive would place society in a similar position."

"Your view of the great sacrifice would startle theologians, I imagine," was my answer. "But, even allowing that Christ was morally responsible for his own death, and thereby set the example you would have followed to save others from suffering; tell me, do you really see any comparison between an act which had the redemption of the world for its object, and the only result that could follow from the sacrifice of one little mother and child?"

"What result, Don?"

"Breaking your husband's heart, spoiling his life, and leaving him lonely forever."

She started up and threw herself on her knees beside me, clasping her hands about my neck.

"O Don, don't say that again!" she cried. "Don't say anything like that again—ever—will you?"

"You know I should never think of it again if I could be sure——"

She hid her head upon my shoulder, but did not answer immediately.

"I am seeking for some assurance in myself to give you," she said at last; "but I feel none. The same train of thought would provoke me again—no, not to the same act, but to something desperate; I can't tell what. But I suffer so, Don, when such thoughts come, from grief, and rage, and horror, I would do almost anything for relief."

"But just think——" I began.

"No, don't ask me to think!" she interrupted. "All my endeavour is not to think. Let me live on the surface of life, as most women do. I will do nothing but attend to my household duties and the social duties of my position. I will read nothing that is not first weeded by you of every painful thought that might remind me. I will play with my baby by day, and curl up comfortably beside you at night, infinitely grateful and content to be so happily circumstanced myself—Don, help me to that kind of life, will you? And burn the books. Let me deserve my name and be 'well pleasing one' to you first of all the world, and then to any with whom I may come in contact. Let me live while you live, and die when you die. But do not ask me to think. I can be the most docile, the most obedient, the most loving of women as long as I forget my knowledge of life; but the moment I remember I become a raging fury; I have no patience with slow processes; 'Revolution' would be my cry, and I could preside with an awful joy at the execution of those who are making the misery now for succeeding generations."

"But, my dear child, it would surely be happier for you to try to alleviate——"

"No, no," she again interrupted. "I know all you can say on that score; but I cannot bear to be brought into contact with certain forms of suffering. I cannot bear the contradictions of life; they make me rage."

"What I want to say is that you should act, and not think," I ventured.

"How can I act without thinking?" she asked.

"You see, if you don't act you must think," I pursued; "and if you do think without acting, you become morbid. The conditions of an educated woman's life now force her to know the world. She is too intelligent not to reason about what she knows. She sees what is wrong; and if she is high-minded she feels forced to use her influence to combat it. If she resists the impulse her conscience cannot acquit her, and she suffers herself for her cowardice."

"I know," she answered. "But don't let us discuss the subject any more."

We were silent for some time after that, and then I made a move as if to speak, but checked myself.

"What is it?" she asked.

"I was going to ask you to do something to oblige me; but now I do not like to."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, much hurt; "do you really think there is anything I would not do for you, if I could?"

"Well, this is mere trifle," I answered. "I want you to take that sturdy much be-ribboned darling of yours to see my poor sick souls in the hospital. A sight of his small face would cheer them. Will you?"

"Why, *surely*," she said. "How *could* you doubt it? I shall be delighted."

"And there was another thing——"

"Oh, don't hesitate like that," she exclaimed. "You can't think how you hurt me."

"I very much wish you would take charge of the flowers in the hospital for me, that was what I was going to say. I should be so pleased if you should make them your special care. If you would cut them yourself, and take them and arrange them whenever fresh ones are wanted, you would be giving me as much pleasure as the patients. And you might say something kind to them as you pass through the wards. Even a word makes all the difference in their day."

"Why didn't you ask me to do this before?" she said, reproachfully.

"I was a little afraid of asking you now," I answered.

"I shall begin to-morrow," she said. "Tell me the best time for me to go?"

There is a great deal in the way a thing is put, was my trite

reflection afterward. If I had given Evadne my reason for particularly wishing her to visit the hospital, she would have turned it inside out to show me that it was lined with objections; but, now, because I had asked her to oblige me simply, she was ready to go; and would have gone if had cost her half her comfort in life. This was a great step in advance. As in the small-pox epidemic, so now at the hospital, she had no horror of anything she *saw*. It was always what she imagined that made her morbid.

CHAPTER XIX.

FOLLOWING these days there came a time of perfect peace for both of us. Evadne's health was satisfactory; she led the life she had planned for herself; and so long as she shut out all thought of the wicked world and nothing occurred to remind her of the "awful needless suffering" with which she had become acquainted in the past, she was tranquilly happy.

Donino rapidly grew out of arms. He was an independent young rascal from the first, and would never be carried if he could walk, or driven from the moment he could sit a pony—grip is the word, I know, but his legs were not long enough to grip when he began, and his rides were therefore conducted all over the pony's back at first. His object was to keep on, and in order to do so without the assistance he scorned, he rode like a monkey.

Evadne was proud of the boy, but she missed the baby, and complained that her arms were empty. It was not long, however, happily,—and *à propos* of the number of my responsibilities, I was taken to task severely one day, and discovered that I had in my son a staunch supporter and a counsellor whose astuteness was not to be despised.

I was finishing my letters one afternoon in the library when Evadne came in with her daughter in her arms, and Donino clinging to her skirt. I expected the usual "Don, I am sure you have done enough. Come and have some tea," and turned to meet it with the accustomed protest: "Just five minutes more, my sweetheart." But Evadne began in quite another tone.

"I have just heard such a *disgraceful* thing about you," she said.

"A disgraceful thing about me!" I exclaimed.

"Yes. I hear you were asked the other day how many children you had, and you answered '*Two or three!*' Now, will you kindly count your children, and when you are quite sure you know the number off by heart, repeat it aloud to me, so that I may have some hope that you will not commit yourself in that way again."

"Oh," I answered, "I know how many *babies* there are; my difficulty is about you. I am never quite sure whether to count you as a child or not."

"Now, I call that a mean little score," she said, carrying her baby off with an affectation of indignation which deceived Donino.

He had been standing with his back to the writing table and his feet firmly planted before him, gravely watching us, and now when his mother left the room he came to my knee and looked up at me confidentially.

"Ou bin naughty, dad?" he asked.

"It looks like it," I answered.

"Ou say ou sorry," he advised.

"What will happen then?" I wanted to know.

"Den de missus 'ill kiss ou," he explained. "Den *dat* all right."

"Truly 'a wise son maketh a glad father,'" I observed.

Donino knitted his brows, and grumbled a puzzled but polite assent. I saw signs of reflection afterward, however, which warned me not to be too sure that I knew exactly where the limits of the little understanding were. But one thing was evident. The boy was being educated on the principle of repent and have done with it. Old accounts are not cast up in this establishment.

Donino watched me putting my writing things away; he was waiting to see me through my trouble. When I was ready, he took as much of my hand as he could hold in his, protectingly, and led me to the drawing room with a dignified air of importance. Sir Shadwell Rock was staying with us at the time, and my daughter was creeping from her mother to him as we entered the room, and receiving a large share of his attention. Donino glanced at him, fearing, perhaps, that his presence as audience would make matters more unpleasant for me.

"Mumme," he said, "dad's tum."

Evadne looked up inquiringly.

"I've come to say I am sorry," I exclaimed.

"Oh," said Evadne, a little puzzled, "that's right."

Donino looked from one to the other expectantly; but as his mother made no move, he edged up to her side, and repeated with emphasis: "Dad's sorry."

"That's right," his mother answered, putting her arm round him, and caressing him fondly.

He drew away from her dissatisfied, and walked to the window, where he stood, with his thumbs in his belt, and his chin on his chest.

"O Don," Evadne whispered, "do look at yourself in miniature! But what is the matter? What have I done to disturb him? or left undone?"

"I said I was sorry, and you haven't kissed me," I replied.

Evadne grasped the situation at last, and got up.

"I suppose I must kiss you," she said. "I hope you won't be naughty again."

The boy made no sign at the moment, but presently he sauntered back to the tea-table as if he were satisfied.

When the children were gone Sir Shadwell asked for an explanation.

"It is beautiful to watch the mind of a young child unfold," he observed; "to notice its wonderful grasp, on the one hand, of ideas one would have thought quite beyond its comprehension, and, on the other, its curious limitations. Now, that boy of yours reasons already from what he observes."

"Clearly," I answered. "He observes that my position in this house is quite secondary, and therefore, although he sees his mother 'naughty' every day, he never thinks for a moment of suggesting that she should 'own up' to me."

"Don, you are horrid!" Evadne exclaimed.

The next day she went out early in the afternoon to pay calls.

Sir Shadwell and I accompanied her to the door to see her into her carriage, and she drove off smiling, and kissing her hand to us.

"Now," I said, as we lingered on the doorstep, watching the carriage glint between the trees: "what do you think about the wisdom of my marriage?"

"Oh," he answered, his eyes twinkling. "You didn't explain, you know, so I naturally concluded that you were merely marrying for your own gratification, in which case you would have been disappointed when you found what I fore-

saw, that, under the circumstances, the pleasure would not be unmixed. You should have explained that your sole purpose was to make a very charming young lady healthy-minded again and happy, if you wanted to know what I thought of your chances of success."

"You're a confounded old cynic," I said, turning into the house.

Sir Shadwell went out into the grounds, and there I found him later, patiently instructing Donino in the difficult art of stringing a bow, his white head bowed beside the boy's dark one, and his benign face wrought into wrinkles of intentness.

I was busy during the afternoon, but I fancied I heard the carriage return. Evadne did not come to report herself to me, however, as was her wont after an expedition, and I therefore thought that I must have been mistaken, and more especially so when she did not appear at tea-time. After tea, Sir Shadwell settled himself with a book, and I left him. In the hall I met the footman who had gone out with Evadne.

"When did you return?" I asked.

"I can't say rightly, Sir George," the man replied. "We only paid one call this afternoon, and then came straight back. Her ladyship seemed to be poorly."

I ran upstairs to my wife's sitting room. She was lying on a couch asleep, her face gray, her eyelids swollen and purple with weeping, her hair disordered. As I stood looking down at her, she opened her eyes and held up her arms to me. She looked ten years older, a mere wreck of the healthy, happy, smiling woman who had driven off kissing her hand to us only a few hours before.

"Tell me the trouble, my sweetheart," I said, kneeling down beside her. "Where did you go to-day?"

"Only to Mrs. Guthrie Brimston," she answered. "But Mrs. Beale was there with Edith's boy, and we talked—O Don!" she broke off. "I wish my children had never been born! The suffering! the awful needless suffering! How do I know that they will escape?"

Alas! alas! that terrible cry again, and just after we had allowed ourselves to be sure that it had been silenced at last forever.

I did not reason with her this time. I could only pet her, and talk for the purpose of distracting her attention, as one does with a child. So far, I had never for a moment lost heart and hope. I could not believe that the balance of her

fine intelligence had been too rudely shaken ever to be perfectly restored; but now at last it seemed as if her confidence in her fellow-creatures, the source of all mental health, had been destroyed forever, and with that confidence her sense of the value of life and of her own obligations had been also injured or distorted to a degree which could not fail to be dangerous on occasion. There are injuries which set up carcinoma of the mind, we know, cancer spots confined to a small area at first, but gradually extending with infinite pain until all the surrounding healthy tissue is more or less involved, and the whole beautiful fabric is absorbed in the morbid growth, for which there is no certain palliative in time, and no possible prospect of cure except in eternity. Was this to be Evadne's case? Alas! alas! But, still, doctors sometimes mistake the symptoms, and find happily that they have erred when they arrived at an unfavourable diagnosis. So I said to myself, but the assurance in no way affected the despair which had settled upon my heart, and was crushing it.

Late that night I was sitting alone in my study. I had been reading Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple, and the book still lay open before me. It was a habit of mine to read the Bible when I was much perturbed. The solemn majestic march of the measured words seldom failed to restore my tranquillity in a wonderful way, and it had done so now. I felt resigned. "Hearken therefore unto the supplication of Thy servant"—I was repeating to myself, in fragments, as the lines occurred to me—"that Thine eyes may be upon this house day and night . . . hear Thou from Thy dwelling place, even from heaven; and when Thou hearest forgive."

I must have dozed a moment, I think, when I had pronounced the words, for I had heard no rustle of trailing garments in the library beyond, yet the next thing I was conscious of was Evadne kneeling beside me. She put her arms round my neck, and drew my face down to her.

"Don," she said, with a great dry sob, "I am sorry. I have annoyed you somehow——"

"Not annoyed me, my wife."

"Hurt you then, which is worse. I have taken all the heart out of you—somehow—I can see that. But I cannot—cannot tell what it is I have done." She looked into my face piteously, and then hid her own on my shoulder, and burst into a paroxysm of sobs and tears.

If only I could have made her comprehend what the trouble was! But there! I *had* tried, and I had failed.

One little white foot peeped out from beneath her dressing gown, the pink sole showing. She had got out of bed and slipped on her *pantoufles* only, and the night was cold. I might have thought that she would lie awake fretting if she were left alone on a night when her mind was so disturbed, and here had I been seeking solace myself and forgetting that great as my own trouble was hers must surpass it even as the infinite does the finite.

But that error I could repair, I hoped, and it should never be repeated.

"Come, my sweetheart," I said, gathering her up close in my arms, "so long as you will let me be a comfort to you, you will not be able to hurt me again; but if at any time you will not listen to my words, if nothing I can do or say strengthens or helps you, if I cannot keep you from the evil that it may not grieve you, then I shall know that I have lost all that makes life worth having, and I shall not care how soon this lamp of mine goes out."

She looked up at me in a strange startled way, and then she clung closer; and I thought she meant that, if she could help it, I should not lose the little all I ask for now—the power to make her life endurable.

THE END.

PRINTED BY BALLANTYNE, HANSON AND CO.
LONDON AND EDINBURGH

00077892

25 OCT 1987
24 OCT 1987

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 02 July, 2018